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## The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent.

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"KIRSTEEN," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER XII.

LORD FROGMORE had divined the course that would be taken by the ladies, and as soon as he escaped he hurried off in the opposite direction, from which, when Mary reached the door, he was visible tranquilly sauntering towards the house. He called to Mary as soon as he saw her at the door. "Miss Hill! I have been trying in vain to find my way to Marsham Pond. Have you time to show me how to go?"

Mary begged him to wait a moment and returned to reassure Letitia. "Whoever it was, it was not Lord Frogmore. He is out in the west shrubbery trying to find the way to Marsham, and he wants me to show him. Whoever it was, it could not be he."

Letitia drew a long breath of relief. "Well," she said, "no one else matters much; but, for goodness' sake, never let us begin to talk again without seeing if there's anybody there."

"Do you want me," said Mary, "or can I go? I will tell Felicie to come down and give you your tea."

"Oh, you can go—it's better there should be some one to amuse Frogmore; but don't you think you'll get anything out of him, for every penny he has should come to the children. Now remember what I say."

"I want none of his pennies," said Mary indignantly; but it was with a sense of relief that she got her hat and went out to Lord Frogmore, who was more kind and understanding than any

other visitor at Greenpark had ever been. They had all taken her undisguisedly for a dependant, all treated her in the easy and unguarded way which unfortunately is the common way of treating a governess or companion, with that manner of contempt—or perhaps it would be most kind to say indifference—which an old maid who is poor and modest is apt to meet with. Her remarks were not noted, her opinions elicited no response; if she was silent, as she most frequently was, nobody cared. But Lord Frogmore always heard her when she said anything, and asked her what she thought of this thing and that. It pleased poor Mary to be considered like other people, on the same level as the rest, whom inevitably in her own mind she had begun to regard with an involuntary responsive scorn as stupid and without feeling. She thought better of her neighbours because she herself was placed in her right position by the sense, the appreciation, or—as she called it—the kindness of old Lord Frogmore.

They went along together through the copsewood which surrounded the trim clearing of garden and tiny park in which the house was inclosed. It was brown and red with autumnal colour and shining in the sun with autumn damp, the heavy dews of the morning which had settled down in the afternoon to a sort of suspended wateriness which made the bushes and the grass glisten. But it was not cold; the afternoon sun diffused a ruddy glow through the air, to which the red and yellow trees added each their suggestion of a contributed light. They had talked about the house, about the weather, so fine for the time of the year, and about Marsham Ponds, which made a picturesque point in the landscape, as they went along, and it was after a little pause that Lord Frogmore began.

"I am going to say something to you, Miss Hill, which perhaps you will consider I have no right to say, but you must remember that I am an old man."

"You may say what you please, Lord Frogmore. I know it will be kind," said Mary; and she added after a moment, with a smile, "But I think it is a mistake to suppose that age can be counted merely by years."

"I am glad you are of that opinion," said the old lord. "I sometimes think so myself; but one is never a good judge in one's own case. Don't you think, however, my dear young lady, that you are yourself in rather a false position here?"

Mary looked at him with a quick change of colour and a glance of interrogation.

"You know," he said, "I took you for the governess—I have never ceased to be ashamed——"

"There was nothing to be ashamed about, Lord Frogmore. I wish I were the governess—then I should not be in a false position—but I don't know enough to teach any one."

"Not even Duke?" he said with a smile. "You are too humble-minded, Miss Hill; but that would not suit Mrs. Parke so well as having all the advantage of you as you are. May I ask, is there any relationship to give her such a claim upon you?"

"Oh, no! But we are very old friends. My father is the Vicar of Grocombe, where all the Ravelstones live."

"Ah," said Lord Frogmore, with a look of satisfaction, "that explains the familiarity of that big fellow, that Australian, not so bad a fellow as his sister seems to think."

"Oh," cried Mary, with a shudder, "he is very rough and very coarse. He has always been the trouble of the family. I am afraid of Ralph, too; but I knew him very well, as I knew them all, when we were children. Letitia used to come a great deal to the Vicarage——"

"I will be bound she came for help for herself, not for you!"

"Oh, don't say so, please. I am sure she was fond of mamma. She had no mother of her own. And she is very kind now. Lord Frogmore, I need not conceal," said Mary, with a sudden flush, "that we are poor. It is quite a poor living, and my father has had to send all the boys out in the world. Unfortunately, we girls have not any education, or we might have helped."

"So much the better, Miss Hill."

"Oh, don't say so!" said Mary. "If you knew what it was to feel so helpless, not to be able to do anything; and just to have to live on and on dependent on your father, good for nothing, with nothing to look forward to! I am saying a great deal more to you than I ever said to any one, Lord Frogmore. Letitia has been very kind. She asked me to come for a long visit so that I might be no expense at home."

"And reminds you of it every day," said the old gentleman.

"Oh," said Mary, off her guard, "how should you know?—not every day—oh, no, no! Sometimes I need to be reminded

for a thing that becomes familiar one is apt to forget. They are very kind at home, and say they miss me more than the good it does them. But I know it is an ease to my father's mind. He thinks it is one at least provided for."

"Do you think you are provided for, Miss Hill?"

Mary hung her head. "I am for the moment. I am sure Letitia is very kind; but if there was any change, or when she really has to get a governess——"

"Should you be sorry to go away?"

"Oh, never sorry to go home," said Mary, with a gleam of light in her face. "I'd rather starve with them than feast with others—but so long as it is an ease to poor papa's mind. He is not so strong as he was; he is getting old."

"About my age, I suppose?" said Lord Frogmore.

"Oh, a great deal more, certainly a great deal more!" cried Mary. She gave, however, a side-long glance at Lord Frogmore's face to make quite sure. "And he has had a hard life. That makes a man old more than years."

"You were good enough to say the same thing before," said the old lord, "that age cannot be counted by years. That is always a pleasant thing to be said by the young to the old."

"But I am not young," said Mary, with a little, frank laugh. "I am middle-aged, which many people think is the worst of all."

"In that case I must borrow your formula, and say age is not counted by years," said the old gentleman. "You have a face on which peace is written. You have not had much trouble, I think, in your life."

Mary grew very serious, for this is an imputation which few people can accept without a protest. But, as she was very sincere, she assented, after a moment, "No; only being poor. And what is that when all the boys, thank God, have done so well?"

"Is that the only trouble you can think of?" said Lord Frogmore.

"The chief, the greatest. When you have to be ashamed of a brother, or to watch him going wrong, and able to do nothing, and never to trust him, there is nothing in the world so dreadful as that. I can forgive Letitia anything," cried Mary, almost with vehemence, "when I think how well all our boys have done, and that two of the Ravelstones——. That is the most dreadful of all."

"I don't think it will interfere with Mrs. Parke's rest," said Lord Frogmore calmly. "And I saw no harm in the Australian. Will you tell me what the boys are doing who have done so well?"

He listened with great interest while Mary, with a brightened countenance and many smiles, made him aware of the successes of "the boys." They were not very great successes from Lord Frogmore's point of view, but he listened as if he had been hearing of bishoprics and wooolsacks while Mary told of the advantages of John, who was in New Zealand, and George, who was farming in Canada, and the missionary, who had won golden opinions, if not joys, in Africa, and the soldier, who was in India with his regiment, but could not afford to come home because of the lessened pay. They were all "abroad"—for it was so difficult to get things at home—but all so approved, so well spoken of, so thoroughly satisfactory! It went to the old lord's heart to see her face of exultation, her happy pride in her family. "Perhaps you will think it is nasty of me to rejoice so over them, when there is poor Ralph so different," said Mary, "but of course there was a great, a very great, difference in their upbringing, though that doesn't always tell, as perhaps you know, Lord Frogmore."

"Indeed I do know; sometimes the most carefully trained go astray. I have known many instances."

"And the most neglected," cried Mary, "whom nobody could have expected anything from, sometimes turn out so well! So that shows it is individual; it is in them, whatever may be their education. Ah, here we are," she said suddenly, with a calming down which was very evident from the fervour of her previous tone, "at Marsham Ponds." One would have said Mary was disappointed to find herself so soon at the end of her walk.

Marsham Ponds were a series of fishponds, a trace of the old time, when a great abbey had stood near, and the supply of fish for Lenten fare was a pressing necessity which had to be provided for. "I think I must turn back now," said Mary. "You will find your way quite easily, Lord Frogmore."

"Stop a little; we may as well return together. I wanted the walk, not to see the ponds. I have seen them often before," said Lord Frogmore. "We lived at Greenpark in the old days when I was a child—if you can suppose I ever was a child." He laughed and paused a little, then resumed, "I remember—it must

be about a hundred years ago—my father bringing me here when he came to the title. He succeeded his grandfather, you may have heard. He brought me here, and lifted me up to see the view. It's not much of a view," said Lord Frogmore, in a parenthesis, "but seen in one particular light, it is not without interest. He said to me, 'Look there, Duke! That's all ours——'" Here he paused again, looked over the wide landscape, which was flat and fell away into long blue depths of distance, and then burst into a laugh. "That is what John will be saying to another little Duke one of these days. They are both quite primed for it," he said.

"Oh, Lord Frogmore, not Mr. Parke; that is not in his thoughts."

The old lord turned round upon her with a little moisture in the corner of his eye. He put out his hand to her hastily. "Thank you, Miss Hill. I think you are right. My brother is free from such thoughts."

"Nobody has any such thoughts," said Mary, but not in the same assured tone.

He shook his head and looked at her, smiling. "Not after what your friend said—that all I had belonged to the children, every penny, that it was their right. Mrs. Parke was very explicit, Miss Hill."

"Oh," said Mary, in a tone of horror, "then it was you after all, and you heard what we said."

"I heard you say nothing that did not do you honour. The other did not surprise me at all. It may be a little premature. Things may not be so certain." He paused a little as if he would have said something more. He was a very neat, well-preserved model of an old gentleman, not so old as the Parkes concluded, with a good colour, a good figure, a firm light foot-step, active and lively notwithstanding his age. The thought of little Duke, who was to be Lord Frogmore some day, and of all his property and possessions, which were being discounted by Mrs. John as belonging to the children, made him not sad, but angry. He had never been disposed to be a passive person, to be managed by those about him; and no one could be less likely to consent to being powerless or helpless now. No one thing of all the many things they calculated upon was certain. His property was still in his own hands, even his title. Many things

surged up in the old gentleman's head, suggestions which disturbed and excited him, but not unpleasantly. What if they might be disappointed altogether, the scheming woman, the silly little boy? John—ah, John! Lord Frogmore turned upon Mary Hill, who was walking by his side, much agitated and in a great tremor, and put his hand upon her arm. "Miss Hill," he said, "I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you for doing justice to my brother John."

"Oh, Lord Frogmore, Letitia is like all mothers: she thinks only of her children. She did not mean what you think. She is not without heart. She is——"

"We'll say nothing about Letitia," said the old lord. "But I am thankful to you for doing justice, and making me do justice, to my brother John."

### CHAPTER XIII.

LORD FROGMORE stayed for some days at Greenpark. He caught cold—quite a slight cold, not worth making any fuss about, if he had not taken such tremendous care of his health, Letitia said scornfully. She said to her husband that she really could not pretend to coddle and take care of him for such a nothing; it would look as if she had a mercenary motive, as if she meant to wheedle him out of something for the children. John did not quite like this tone, for Frogmore was his own brother after all, and Letitia was only a Parke by marriage. But he said, "I don't know why you should trouble when Miss Hill is here." So this was how it ended. Mary was made over permanently to Lord Frogmore to amuse him. He did not want nursing. Rogers, his man, who knew exactly what to do in any emergency, took care of that. Rogers was so clever that he was half a doctor, having studied all his master's ailments and having in every possible combination of circumstances the right thing to administer. It filled Mrs. Parke with mingled consternation and awe to see all the precautions that were taken.

"Why, he will never die," she said to Mary. "His exercise and his food and every habit he has are like a doctor's book. Felicie tells me such stories about his clothes; he is dressed by the thermometer; if you will believe me, and things put into his bath to strengthen him and brighten him up; and all kinds of

preparations of food. It is Rogers' whole work looking after him, day and night. What a cooking up of the poor body, Mary Hill ! It's against Scripture, and every law."

"But there's nothing wrong in keeping one's self well."

"Oh, well ! it is not that—it is trying to get the better of Providence, not to speak of poor John and the children. What he means is never to die."

Mrs. Parke was really alarmed by this determination on the part of the man to whom her husband was heir. All those precautions (which, if not positively sinful, were so little consistent with the desire to be at rest which ought to be the prevailing sentiment of old people) were intended to keep John out of his inheritance—to prevent herself from becoming Lady Frogmore. If the old lord succeeded in his wicked plan of living on to an indefinite time, John and she might be old people before they came to their kingdom—nay, more horrible still, John (who took very little care of himself) might die first and leave Letitia only Mrs. Parke for ever, even though little Duke might come to the title. This was a contingency which filled her with horror. She felt that she would willingly have seized the old gentleman and shaken him, but then reflected again with dismay upon his trim, steady figure, his alert walk, his rosy countenance. He looked, when she came to think of it, stronger than John ! He had Rogers to watch over him night and day. He had Valentine's Meat Juice and Brand's Essence (if these concentrated comforts were invited) administered to him whenever he felt a sinking ; he had some sort of elixir of life put into his bath. What he intended was never to die. Mrs. John Parke became pale with the horror of this thought, and she felt that she could not endure the old egotist, the selfish, self-absorbed old man. "It is all I can do to be civil to him at dinner and ask after his cold in the morning. Do, for goodness' sake, amuse him a little, Mary Hill. You don't feel it as I do—you've no cares to distract your mind, and it's far easier for you to put on a face and sympathize with people about nothing than for me. I'm too sincere for that sort of thing," Letitia said.

"But don't you think it might be better to pay him a little attention, just to show that you are interested, if it were only for half an hour, Letitia ?"

"Oh, what is the good of having you in the house with nothing

to do if you can't manage a little thing like that for me, Mary Hill?"

Mary was silenced, and had no reply to make. She had herself no objection whatever to read the papers and talk to Lord Frogmore. He was very kind. His nice old ways, which were very precise and regular, almost, she said to herself, like a lady's ways, suited Mary, who was a little prim in her middle-aged decorum. She had no objection to the entrance of Rogers with his little cough mixture, or digestive pill, or cup of soup. On the whole, perhaps, she liked the little fuss of invalidism, the cares which a little ailment or any amusing little illness which meant nothing demanded. To draw out the screen so as to shield the old gentleman from an imaginary draught, to change for him the arrangement of his cushion and his footstool, to put book and paper-cutter ready upon the little table when she herself was called away, was really pleasant to her. And when he declared that a slight cold was quite an agreeable thing in pleasant company, and that it was delightful to have a right to so many little attentions, it gave Mary a serene pleasure to find herself so useful. Another part of her duty was not perhaps so justifiable, but she discharged it with devotion. She accounted for the absence of Letitia in an unvarying round of praiseworthy ways. She made a fancy portrait of Mrs. Parke, which was beautiful to behold. She was so devoted a wife, taking every trouble from John, leaving him free for his shooting and all his amusements. She was so excellent a housekeeper, making it possible by her good management to entertain a great deal, which was so good for her husband. She was the best of mothers, giving so much of her attention to her children.

"I am coming to believe that my sister-in-law is not a woman at all, but a bundle of virtues," said Lord Frogmore.

"Oh, not that!" cried Mary, with a blush, "not that at all. She has her faults, of course, but her whole heart is in her own family, to do everything for them——"

"At all events, she has one great quality—she has the art of making a devoted friend," said Lord Frogmore, with a smile which made Mary blush again.

"Oh," she cried, "I am of so little account. I can never do anything for her, except the smallest things."

"Such as taking care of an old bore with a cold," said the old

gentleman. Mary felt that she had not been warm enough in Letitia's praises, for he never shook off that cynical look, while certainly Letitia might have showed him a little more attention. Mary wondered sometimes if it was true that she herself found it easy to make up a face and sympathize with people, and if Letitia was, as she said, too sincere. She found herself sympathizing with Lord Frogmore in a way which perhaps was absurd, for he was not ill; he was really enjoying his cold and all the attentions it procured him. It was bad weather, and there was no temptation to go out. It was not as if he were really ill, and it was an act of devotion to nurse him. Was she making up a face? Mary said to herself, "No," with a little indignation. She did not feel herself to be insincere. Still perhaps it was easier for her than for Letitia to show sympathy with other people's troubles, whether they were small or great.

Lord Frogmore got better and went away, having considerably outstayed the original limits of his visit. And, to tell the truth, his going was a great relief to the household, except to Mary, who missed him very much. The Parkes by this time had got rid of their visitors, and were themselves setting out upon a little round of visits to taste other people's dinners and shoot other people's covers. On such occasions, which occurred periodically, Mary was left in charge of the house. She had to keep the servants in hand, which was not an easy task, for they all knew that she was a dependant without wages, and naturally held her authority very light; and she had to watch over the children, to send for the doctor when he was wanted, to superintend the nurses, to keep everything in the established routine. It was not a pleasant office, for nobody in the house chose to be subordinate to a poor lady who was not even the governess, who was only a friend and of no account personally, living on the kindness of the mistress of the house. This did not account, however, for the excitement with which she rushed into Letitia's boudoir on the morning of their departure, looking alternately very red and very white, and scarcely able to speak for an agitation which took away her breath.

"Oh, Letitia, can I speak to you?" she cried, bursting into the room in a manner quite unlike her usual soft movements. Letitia was at the moment superintending the shutting up of her box, in which all her best dresses were, and which was reluctant to close.

"Well, my dear, you can speak as much as you like; but as for expecting me to pay any attention just at this moment, when I am in the agonies of packing! Kneel on the lid, Felicie, and I'll try and turn the key."

"Letitia, please, just a moment. There's something which I want to tell you—to consult you about."

"You are the oddest creature in the world, Mary Hill. Consult me! when the carriage is nearly at the door, and all my things to pack. *C'est fini* at last, Felicie. *Fermez le bonnet-box*, too, and give me my keys. Well, what is it, Mary? You don't speak."

"I can't tell you before anybody," said Mary in a low voice. "I've got a letter——"

"Oh, you've got a letter! I can't send Felicie away, because there are so many little things to do; but she doesn't count. I say all sorts of things before her. Is it from one of the boys?"

"No, Letitia. Oh, please, a moment—it's very important."

"It's from Ralph, and he's asked you to marry him? I never thought he was such a fool. And I hope you're not going to be a fool to snap at him—with not a penny between you," Letitia added, growing red. "That's all the advice I am going to give. You're old enough to judge for yourself, but neither you nor he must look for anything from us, neither money nor influence—we shall do nothing for you—nothing! You may as well know that from the first."

Mary had been white and trembling with agitation; now she turned red with one of those sudden fits of exasperation which attack even the mildest. To have this said to her before the waiting-maid, who concealed a smile and the look of intelligence which had flashed into her eyes under a demure gravity, was enough to have upset the temper of a saint.

"It is not from Ralph," she said very quietly.

"Oh, it's not from Ralph? Well, that's a very good thing. Felicie, *attachez les straps*—or leave them for Robert to do, if you like—and bring me my cloak. Well, so it is not from Ralph, Mary? Then who is it from? It's a proposal, one can see from your face. Take it whoever it comes from, Mary. You haven't time, my dear, to pick and choose."

"Will you let me speak to you in your room, Letitia?"

"There's no time," said Mrs. Parke. "Felicie, *mon chapeau* and

my gloves ! There's the carriage. I've only one piece of advice, Mary—take it if it's a decent offer. You can't expect to get many more at your age."

"It is more than a decent offer. Oh, Letitia, it is from an old gentleman, one much older, and far above me."

"Did you expect a young one?" said Mrs. Parke. "I think you would be very, very silly to stand upon that. I know who it is. It is old Dr. Hilton; and just an excellent match—an admirable match—the very thing I should have wished for you. Old ! I hope you are not such a fool as to think of that ! Think of your father and mother, and the use you might be to them. And as for far above you, why you're a clergyman's daughter; you are in the same rank in life. Mary, mind what I say to you. Don't be a fool."

"But it's not Dr. Hilton. Oh, Letitia, only a moment ! I must speak to you."

"There is John calling," said Mrs. Parke composedly. "Good-bye, Mary; I can't stop a moment longer. Take care of the boy, and mind you don't let Saunders and the rest get the upper hand. Who can it be if it's not Dr. Hilton ? But whoever it is, mind what I say. What does age matter ? If he can support you, and leave you something when he dies, take him, take him, Mary Hill. At your age what could you expect more ?"

Mary followed her friend downstairs. It was of no use saying any more. Mrs. Parke had many directions to give as she went away. She had to say good-bye to the children, who were in the hall to see the last of mamma. She had to silence John, who was calling to her, to question Felicie, who lagged behind. "Mind you take care of the boy," she said, looking back, waving her hand to Mary. "Mind you keep everything going, and you can write and tell me all about it. Nurse, if there is anything the matter call Miss Hill at once, and she will know what to do. Ta-ta, baby; good-bye, Duke: mind you're good till I come back; and good-bye, Letty and Johnny: be good children, all of you. Felicie, what on earth keeps you always behind?"

Then the carriage rolled away, followed by the cab with Felicie and the boxes, and stillness fell upon the abandoned house, stillness at least so far as the sitting-rooms were concerned, but a louder note than usual from the nurseries, and a jovial hum in the servants' hall, where everybody felt their holiday had begun.

Mary went back into the house from the doorsteps, on which she had been standing dazed, contemplating the carriage and Felicie's cab as they rolled away. She came in like a ghost, her face very pale, her limbs trembling with an agitation which was only increased by the fact that Letitia was now permanently out of hearing, and that there was nobody left from whom she could ask any advice. She wandered up and down the different rooms for some time, seating herself here and there for a moment, then springing up again to try another chair and another position. At last she went into the library and sat down upon a low chair before the fireplace. There was no fire in that room, which was not a room ordinarily much frequented by the ladies of the house, and the first to fall into the neglect which characterizes a house from which the masters are absent. The fire had not been lighted, though it was November and a dull cold day. Mary sat down upon this little chair by the cold hearth, and she covered her face with her hands and leaned her head against the arm of the great chair which stood close to her. Here for a moment she could rest and think. She sat quite still for a long time in the absolute solitude of the place, and covered her eyes from all external distractions; but it would scarcely be just to say that Mary was thinking, much less that she was wisely balancing the good against the evil, and making up her mind what she should do.

It would be more just to say that her mind went whirling round and round like the scientific toy which represents processions of moving figures flying past, steeplechases, hunting-fields, negro contortionists, Christy's minstrels. Everything was going round and round with Mary. She herself seemed only to be looking on, seeing the whirl which was going through her brain. It settled down a little after a time and solidified into the neat little figure which for so many days had occupied the chair on which she was leaning. Her thoughts all paused, stopped short in the whirl of them, and standing aside like so many country attendants, allowed Lord Frogmore to reveal himself in the silence. There he stood, active, small, alert, with his short white curling locks and ruddy colour. There he sat, with his precise little ways, his cup of soup, his cough mixtures, Rogers, his man, taking such care of him. Mary's heart jumped up and began to throb in her ears and jump in her throat like the piston of a steam engine. Lord Frogmore! And she had his letter in her pocket, a nice letter, a letter full of

respect and honour, setting her in so high a place, doing her justice and far more than justice, Mary thought. No sign in all he said of the old maid at whom Letitia had assured her, and she herself had found, men laugh. Lord Frogmore showed no consciousness that she was an old maid, that she was past her bloom, that she was poor and he was doing her a great honour—oh, not a sign of that! If she had been a duke's daughter and a creature beautiful as the day, the old gentleman could not have written with more tender respect. Mary was not without pride, humble woman though she was, and she had received many a wound among Letitia's careless friends and visitors, wounds of which she was too proud to say anything and too good to resent, but of which she had deeply felt the sting. But out of Lord Frogmore's letter there seemed to have come a balm which soothed and healed her very soul. She felt herself put in her right place, respected honoured, approved. If it did no more than this for her, it had done what words could not express. She sat hiding her face and felt this balm steal over and heal her wounds.

And it was only after this, after a long interval, after the first whirl of agitation and the hush of gratified and soothed sensation, the charm and sweetness of being at length appreciated and understood, that Mary began to think—what answer was she to make?—what was she to do?

#### CHAPTER XIV.

It is a great wonder in morals that the chances of matrimonial changes which may occur in the life of an unmarried woman, absolutely at any moment, should not exercise a more demoralizing effect than they do upon the feminine mind. It is always possible, not only for a girl, but even for a woman who has reached the middle of life, to have her position and prospects changed in a moment as by the waving of a magician's hand, and that probably not by any virtue or by any exertion of her own, fortuitously, accidentally, by what seems mere chance and good fortune. A poor girl, the daughter of a fallen family, with very little natural prospect of advancement in any direction, will suddenly wake to find herself a duchess, placed on the very highest pinnacle of fortune; a poor woman, who has passed half of her life in a struggle with poverty, will be lifted into sudden enjoy-

ment of wealth and all that it brings. Why? By the merest chance, by pleasing some one, possibly unawares, without any intention—possibly, it is true, by the exercise of all her gifts for the purpose. And it by no means follows that these extraordinary chances involve any revolting bargains, any sale or barter of an odious kind. The girl may love her duke and the woman her millionaire just as much as if the duke was a lieutenant in a marching regiment or the millionaire a banker's clerk. It is astonishing that women should be so little demoralized by the possibility of such an accident. It may be said that it happens rarely. Still it does happen, and everybody knows one instance at least.

Such an accident had now happened to Mary Hill. Such a thing as marriage had long passed out of her thoughts. She had gone through the ordinary process in such matters, having had her youthful dreams, her maidenly fancies, her conviction that some time, some day, the hero would come round the turn of the road, and life would change into enchantment. For a certain period in life that is to a girl the one certainty, perhaps not to-day or to-morrow, yet possibly at any moment—a thing as sure as the rising of the sun, yet veiled in delightful mysteries and unknowableness—a vague anticipation, the poem of existence. After a time, if Prince Charming does not appear, the expectation begins to flag; a curious question, the strangest discouraging doubt, creeps into the mind. Is she perhaps to be the one left out, the one to whom the enchanter is not to come? To trace the process from that first doubt, which is so startling, which gives a sudden check to life, to the calm certainty that no such thing would ever happen to her which had long filled the gentle bosom of Mary Hill, would take too much time and space. It need only be said that Mary had accepted the position years ago. Her sister Agnes and she had long given up any thoughts of the kind. Their hearts fluttered no longer when they gazed along the blank road by which no hero had ever come. They had settled down as middle-aged women. No doubt they had both known what it was to struggle and rebel in their hearts against the strait bondage of life that confined them, the situation of girls in their father's house which was so sweet at twenty, so little adapted to the maiden mind at forty. They had gone through all that, but had never said anything about it

even to each other. Most probably they would have thought it sinful, horribly unwomanly, to rebel thus against their lot. All that they permitted themselves to say was, with a sigh, that they had no education, and could not be governesses, nor do anything. Sometimes it would come over them with a shiver that their father was old, growing older every day, and that the time must come when that dear old bare house at the Vicarage would be theirs no more; but so helpless were they that it was tacitly understood between them nothing should be said of this. It would be dreadful even between themselves to put it into words that the vicar must die, to seem to calculate on the end of his existence. It lay between them, a dark point in the future at which their human life seemed to stop, but that was all. As for any piece of good fortune that might happen, above all any proposals of marriage, that was a thing as far over and passed away as the frocks of their childhood. They had both accepted the rôle of old maid without rebellion, if, at the beginning, with a faint sigh.

And now here had fallen at Mary's feet not that thunderbolt out of a clear sky of which people speak as the most startling image of a sudden catastrophe, but a sudden blaze of impossible light through the afternoon dulness. It was no catastrophe; and yet it gave a shock almost as great. To be suddenly made rich beyond the brightest dreams—though indeed Mary had never dreamt of being rich at all—to be introduced into what seemed to the vicar's daughter the loftiest society in the world; to be able to help everybody belonging to her; to shed a glory upon the Vicarage; to cause a thrill of pride to all the most distant of her kin; to impress the distant sisters-in-law whom Mary suspected of not being very respectful of the unmarried sisters, and of entertaining fears lest some time those unprovided women should expect something from John and George—all these suggestions played upon her, shining in her eyes like the afternoon sunshine, blinding her with unexpected light. Her heart jumped up to think of these things, then dropped down again with a sinking fall when her mind turned to the other side, and she thought of Letitia. Oh, it was needless to try to persuade herself that when Letitia said, "Don't be a fool, Mary Hill," and bade her certainly to accept the old gentleman who had proposed to her, Mrs. Parke had any perception of the real

state of the case. Had Letitia guessed that it was Lord Frogmore, had she for an instant suspected that her humble friend was to be elevated over her own head, no doubt she would have given a very different verdict. Mary remembered all she had said, her warning that nothing must be expected from Frogmore, that all he had must come to the children, her resentment of his care of his own health as keeping her out of her kingdom. Her heart sank lower and lower as she thought of this. What would Letitia say *if she knew*? Mary immediately realized that Letitia would not only say, but do, anything a desperate woman could to stop it. She would be mad with fury and passion. She would publish her wrong, her version of the story, her account of how Mary Hill had "made up" to the old lord. And yet in her heedlessness she had bidden her dependant to accept the old gentleman, of course, whoever he was, so long as he could provide for her. Mary sat and thought over all these things till her head ached and her brain grew dizzy. She was stiff with cold and agitation and excitement when she got up at last and crept away to the dying fire in the morning-room, which was the only room where any comfort was. She knew already that to be left in charge of the house when the Parkes were away was no pleasant office. The fire in the morning-room was the only fire in that part of the house inhabited by its masters. All the rest had fallen into gloom and emptiness. Mary met the housemaids with their pails as she went upstairs—a thing, it need scarcely be said, never visible when Mrs. Parke was at home. She saw Saunders as she crossed the hall lounging in his shirt sleeves, and smelt the footman's tobacco. Nobody cared to keep up the decorum of the household for Miss Hill. Who was Miss Hill? Less, a great deal, than an upper servant, who was well paid and knew his place. Nobody had the least intention of putting himself or herself to any restraint or inconvenience to please Miss Hill. Mary knew this very well, and knew it would be necessary to ask as little as possible in order to avoid impertinence. She knew that she was not wanted, that she was considered a spy, left to report upon their doings and limit their freedom. She mended the fire with economy, hoping to be able to keep herself warm all day with the contents of the coal scuttle, not to have to appeal to Saunders for more. And if they only knew! To think that she had so much in her power

lying at her feet, waiting her compliance! She laughed unconsciously as she thought of it, and how those impudent servants would abase themselves, and people of far more importance bow before her and put on their best smiles, and all for no virtue of hers, for no change in her, for nothing but because she had it in her power to become Lady Frogmore.

The reader may think that in all this there was but little question of the chief matter involved, of Lord Frogmore himself, the old gentleman who had it in his power to do so much for Mary. But this did not involve the injury to him that might be supposed, for, as a matter of fact, the idea of accepting Lord Frogmore, and living with him, and taking care of him was in no way disagreeable to Mary. She liked the old lord. He had never been anything but kind, respectful, sympathetic, to her; he had greatly comforted her *amour propre*, which was often touched in Letitia's house and by Letitia's friends. He had even raised her own opinion of herself, which had been sadly broken down by continual snubbing. In every way his society, his friendship, his kindness, had been good for Mary. Love was not a thing to be thought of; it was out of date; it was scarcely modest even to suggest it: but that she could and did feel affectionately towards Lord Frogmore, Mary had no doubt, and he asked for no more. There was no drawback on that side. She could have married him had he been the clergyman in the next parish. The difficulties, in fact, rose chiefly from those tremendous advantages which it was impossible to over-calculate, which seemed on the face of them too good to be true. And yet who could be injured by it? Mary asked herself. She would not have any one despoiled for her. The children could not lose much, and what they lost would only be till she died. She was forty, and Duke was five. Perhaps she might not live long enough to see Duke come of age. She would not keep the children long out of their money, and it would be very little. That was the only harm that could happen to them if she married Lord Frogmore.

It is needless to say that Mary thought of nothing else all day. She did not answer the letter, but put it carefully into her desk after having read it over three or four times, and if she hesitated as to what reply she should make, it was not at all because of any objection she had to Lord Frogmore.

In the afternoon she went to the nursery, where the nurse, a

very fine person who considered herself much above supervision even from the mother, received her with scant courtesy. She stood over the children while Mary talked to them, and when little Letty pulled off a bit of old glove to show Mary a little sore finger, nurse made a step forward and pushed the little girl away. "I must ask you, Miss Hill, not to interfere with Miss Letty's finger. I am treating it in the proper way, and I won't have any meddling."

"But I have no desire to meddle," said Mary, surprised.

"Oh, we all know what it means when a lady is left to spy about," said the woman, turning little Letty, who began to cry, out of the room.

This was a very unpromising beginning, and nurse would not allow that the children should go downstairs in the evening to hear Mary play, and to sing their little songs about the piano.

"When their mamma is here she can do as she pleases, but I don't hold with such things," said the nurse.

Mary was all the more lonely in consequence in the twilight hour, which she was used to employ in amusing the children, and when she went downstairs later to see whether it was the design of the authorities downstairs to give her any dinner, she found Saunders in the dining-room, with his elbows on the table and a bottle of wine before him, reading the paper. He looked up at the sound of the door opening, and by instinct started up, but recollecting himself, fell back in his chair and confronted her.

"I consider," said Saunders, "as this room is not in the ladies' part of the 'ouse—but was you wanting anything, Miss 'Ill?"

"You surprise me very much, Saunders," said Mary, with a little quickening of the breath.

"Mister Saunders, if you please, I don't think would be out o' place, miss. I am the head man when master is away."

"I think you are very much out of place where you are, Saunders, and that Mr. Parke would not be at all pleased——"

"If he knew," said Saunders. "I don't say as 'e would. I'm a-consulting of my own convenience, not thinking of him; and he'll never know."

"How can you tell that? It will be my duty to tell him at once."

"It's a duty as you'll never do. We know you well, all of us, in this 'ouse. And if you're sensible you'll take my advice. You'll be seen to, and kept comfortable, if you don't give no

trouble. Cook is a-sending you up a bit of dinner. You'll be waited on as good, or better, as you were ever used to—but, Lord bless you, what's the good of pretending? You was never used to a man like me waiting upon you, and why should you now? John, he says the same thing. We're very hard worked when they're at 'ome, and we're going to have an 'oliday. It won't make no difference what you say."

"I don't care at all," cried Mary, "whether you wait upon me or not, but you will be so good as to retire from here."

"And what if I don't, miss?"

If this was a romantic tale I should recount how the man was subdued, how he hesitated and finally withdrew in obedience to the influence of her presence and the dignity of her look. But I am obliged to say that no such result followed. Saunders, who had been drinking and was just at the point when audacity is paramount, sat leaning with both his elbows on the table, staring across it at the poor lady for whom he would have had no respect whatever had she looked like a queen, and it was Mary who was frightened. She repeated, "I must ask you to retire from this room," but with a faltering voice, for she knew that she had no authority to enforce her request, and so did he.

"Sorry to disoblige you, miss, if you think it ain't becoming. But I'm very comfortable, thank ye, here."

She stood a moment irresolute, not knowing what to do, and then it was she who retired. She said, "I will write to Mr. Parke," but Saunders replied only with an insolent laugh. And Mary hurried upstairs again with something like terror. She found the footman without his coat on the stairs, carrying down the hunting clothes which John Parke had worn on the previous day, and accompanied by one of the housemaids, who was by way of helping him with jocular snatchings and droppings of the burden. They scarcely paused in their flirtation when Mary appeared. She said, in her mildest tones, "You forget, John, that your mistress likes you to use the back stairs."

"My missis ain't here," said the man. "It's all one the front stairs and the back stairs when they're away."

"I do not think Mrs. Parke would be pleased to hear you say so," said Mary.

"Well, she don't hear me say so," replied the man, with an insolent air.

"Oh, John!" said the housemaid, "don't answer Miss 'Ill like that. Don't you know as she's set over us to see as we does our duties, and tell everything as goes wrong?"

"I don't hold with no spies, I don't," said John, "whether they's ladies or whether they's Irish fellows. I don't say things behind folk's backs as I wouldn't say to their faces; and I says, Miss 'Ill——"

"Be so good as not to speak at all," said Mary, quickly hurrying past. They burst into a great noise of laughter when she was gone—a shrill celebration of triumph. She got back to the morning-room with a sensation of dismay for which she had no words. She was all alone, with the household in mutiny behind her. She was startled, however, to see that some one was before her arranging neatly enough and with quiet care the tray with Mary's dinner, which, according to Saunders' instruction, had been sent up there. The maid was an under-housemaid—a quiet and good girl, whom Mary had been kind to. But even she had her part in the revolt. When she had arranged everything, she came up to Mary, who had thrown herself into a chair by the fire.

"I think everything's here, miss," she said. "Perhaps you will just look and see if there's anything more you will want."

"It will do very well, I am sure, Jane."

"I want to know, if you please," said Jane, "whether you'll want anything more to-night; for we're going to have a party in the servants' hall, and I'd rather get it now than be called after, if you please."

"You are going to have a party in the servants' hall?"

"Yes, miss. Mr. Saunders and John is going to do some acting, and there's going to be a dance. If you'll excuse me, I shouldn't like to be called away."

"I shall not want you any more," said Mary.

She tried to smile at the festivity which had turned all their heads. But when, a little later, the sounds of the downstairs merriment came pealing up the great staircase, Mary felt like a prisoner abandoned among enemies. She had never felt so much alone as in the dreary silence of the house, with the distant revels going on, a genteel dependant scoffed at by all the conspirators downstairs—and all the while Lord Frogmore's letter in her desk.

*(To be continued.)*

# The Court of Joseph I. of Portugal.

IN TWO PARTS.

By BRITIFFE SKOTTOWE,

Author of "A SHORT HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT."

## PART I.

### THE ROYAL FAMILY.

THE condition of Portugal during the eighteenth century may be compared to that of some backwater of a mighty river, which, being almost unaffected by the rush of the main current, inevitably stagnates, becomes choked up with weeds and innumerable foul growths, developing at last into a hotbed of insect and amphibious life. Ever and anon, when the flood of this river rises higher than its wonted level, a great wave comes sweeping up into the shady recesses of the backwater, tearing away the loosely-rooted weeds, stirring up the alluvial mud, and bringing with it a strong puff of fresh air which sorely disconcerts the gauzy-winged tribes that have bred in the foul atmosphere generated by continued decay. The effect, however, is but brief. Stagnation soon re-asserts its sway. The mud sinks down smoothly to the bottom; the weeds renew their growth with ranker luxuriance; the living loathsome things return once more to their wonted haunts; a thick greenish-white scum mantles slowly on the surface of the water; the air becomes more and more obnoxious to ordinary wholesome life. But then in a backwater it is not possible for stagnation to develop naturally *ad infinitum*. The first outbreak of the rains and floods that usher in the winter are quite sufficient to sweep out the accumulated foulness of the summer, while the frosty breath of the wintry winds as surely reduces to dust the myriads of insects that have crawled and swooped and fluttered all through the sunny summer hours. The green scum rides unsteadily off, and is dissolved on the open river. The swift rush of the dark waters soon sweeps the banks and bottom as bare as the bed of a watercourse. So

complete is the cleansing and the transformation effected by the forces of Nature that the visitor who had wandered on the grassy banks under the July sun would hardly recognize towards the end of November the scene which he had visited under such different circumstances.

Since the date of her absorption by the overpowering monarchy of Spain, Portugal had been passing through a phase of slow but persistent stagnation. The turbulent current of European politics rolled loud-voiced almost on her frontier, but passed her by in complete isolation. Now and again it seemed as if the violence of the flood would cause it to overflow its channel and rush impetuously into the secluded angle of land which forms the outermost bulwark of Europe; but these periods were few and far between, and the result was by no means lasting. The decadence of the Spanish monarchy under the descendants of Philip II. enabled Portugal to re-assert her independence under the House of Braganza, and to finally secure it at the battle of Villa Viciosa in 1655; but it must be added that the Portuguese owed their success as much to the generalship of a foreigner, Count Schomberg, as to their own efforts. The results, however, of this revolution were really more important for Spain than for the revolted nation. It inflicted a deadly stroke on the Spanish monarchy, which was already staggering under the shock of the Dutch Rebellion and the defeats of the Thirty Years' War. Portugal, however, after a short period of abortive efforts at development, returned once more into the condition of stagnation to which the rule of Spain and the influence of the Jesuits had reduced her. In shaking off the supremacy of Spain the Portuguese had really freed themselves from only half the yoke which had weighted them so heavily for nearly a century. Their slavery to the domination of the followers of Ignatius Loyola was wholly unaffected by the revolution which separated the two countries; and the blighting influence of the Order of Jesus was a more determined and fatal foe to the prosperity and development of the country than even the cruel and crafty Philip II. of Spain.

For nearly a hundred years the tiny Portuguese kingdom passed from one stage of decay to another. There were no forces of a winter season to sweep the country from end to end and impart fresh and vigorous life to her institutions and the aspirations of her people. The degraded condition to which she had sunk in

the opinion of her neighbours and the ruin which had fallen on her defensive forces may be estimated by the fact that she became the prey of the roving pirates from Algiers, Tunis and Morocco, who, following in the lines laid down by the Portuguese themselves on the shores of Africa, swooped like vultures on the defenceless coasts of the peninsula and swept off hundreds of men, women and children into hopeless slavery without encountering any effective resistance. A rough appreciation of the state of social civilization in Portugal may be gathered when we realize that forks were not known there until the middle of the eighteenth century—that before 1745 even the greatest nobles were accustomed to dine without the aid of these useful adjuncts to the dinner-table, and that when they were first introduced they were viewed with suspicion as a new-fangled invention brought from the home of all heresy—England. To compare the condition of Portugal at this date to that of Russia would be an insult to the Russia of Elizabeth Petrovna. Russia, it is true, had not yet emerged from Asia or thrown off a tithe of the barbarism which had been bequeathed to her by the Khans of the Golden Horde; but Russia was developing fast under the House of Romanof. She was advancing on Europe with the strides of a giant; the end of the century would see her seated in the highest place among the Powers. The movements of Portugal were slow; they tended away from Europe and towards Africa. Her development was indeed but the continual germination of decay.

It was just at this period that a determined effort was made to rescue the country from the slough of despond in which she was sunk, to restore vitality to her government and political institutions, to set a limit to the overweening power of the Church and the great nobles, to re-organize the army and navy on an efficient basis, to encourage the growth of commerce and manufactures, which had been stifled by repressive laws, and to introduce as much of European civilization as the people were capable of assimilating.

The attempt was a magnificent one, but it was foredoomed to failure. In Portugal, as in Russia, the will of the sovereign was the final cause; there was no stability in other institutions. It was quite possible for Sebastian de Carvalho, Marquis of Pombal, the great minister of Joseph I. (1750-1777) to force his projects on the country in the face of the most active hostility from the

two powerful classes who they chiefly attacked, provided that he was supported by the sovereign ; and for nearly thirty years, fortified by the approval of Joseph, he ruled Portugal with a free hand. The successor of Joseph, however, his daughter Maria, was a lady of strong and narrow views, who had witnessed with horror the attacks on the Church and the old order, who identified progress with the most deadly heresy and Pombal himself with the arch-enemy of mankind. A sweeping re-action followed her accession. The edifice which Pombal had reared with so much labour fell at once to the ground. The Jesuits returned and re-asserted their blighting influence. Portugal sank once more into the drowsy slumber from which she was next to be aroused by the loud tramp of Napoleon's legions. It was only his advanced age which saved Pombal from the extreme punishment and Portugal from the disgrace of murdering the greatest of all her children of the century.

To Joseph, Pombal's master, belongs the credit of having supported him unhesitatingly against all the efforts of his enemies, even when it seemed that the principal result of the minister's policy would be the assassination of his royal master. It is impossible, however, to credit him with any remarkable foresight or enlightenment. He probably comprehended merely that the tendency of this policy was to strengthen the power of the Crown and to improve the revenue, and the prospect could not but prove attractive to a monarch whose power and revenue were exceedingly limited.

The court of Lisbon towards the end of Joseph's reign presented a mixture of barbarism, imperfectly glossed over with a thin veneer of European refinement, which impressed English travellers in somewhat the same degree as the court of St. Petersburg under the early Romanofs. A haunting sense, however, of a colossal and remorseless power, looming menacingly through a veil of extravagant luxury—as if Perun, the terrible thunder-god, were masquerading in the soft shining raiment of the Nymph of the Volga—was ever present to the mind of even the most favoured of the visitors at the court of the Tzars and Tzaritsas. In Portugal, however, the feeling of awe is impossible ; it gives place to a sense of the purely strange and grotesque. An ugly and deformed dwarf, clothed in gaudy apparel and bedecked with innumerable ornaments of paste, would form the fitting *pendant*

to the symbolic figure of Russia described above. Portugal was not included in the grand tour which every young Englishman of rank was practically obliged to take if he wished to qualify as a man of fashion, nor did the errant nobility of Europe consider it worth their while to visit the little kingdom on the verge of the Atlantic. The attractions of Lisbon could not compete with those of Paris, Rome, Florence or Vienna. Even Berlin possessed more interest for the traveller who wished to see the face of the great Frederick, and to visit the scenes of the murderous struggles of the Seven Years' War. Some few inquisitive wanderers, however, occasionally visited Portugal, and there was always a small band of diplomatists at the Portugese Court to represent the interests of the greater Powers. It may be added that the highest hope of the statesmen in question was that they would be transferred to some other and less heartbreaking post in the shortest possible time. From memoirs and official documents, therefore, compiled both by tourists and diplomatists, we are able to extract a very graphic description of the court of Joseph I. towards the latter end of his reign.

Joseph himself, between the years 1770-1777, was a tall and rather bulky person, whose figure only too plainly betrayed the effects of his gastronomical excesses. He was "tolerably good-looking;" his features were regular, his eyes mobile and expressive; but the *tout ensemble* of his countenance was entirely ruined by an unfortunate trick of keeping his mouth open at all times, which communicated a very foolish expression to the lower portion of his visage, and inspired a stranger with the erroneous idea that his Majesty must be somewhat wanting in intellect. His complexion had once been good and clear, but the almost African climate of Portugal had burnt it to a rich brown, and excessive indulgence in the wine of Oporto had further coloured it to a lurid dusky red, which reminded Sir Nathaniel Wraxall of the sun at noonday. The king's appearance, in fact, was hardly European. His complexion was that of a Moor of Fez or Marquinez, and if he had adopted the Turkish dress, placed a turban on his head and slung a scimitar at his side, he might easily have passed for the Dey of Algiers, or the Bey of Morocco. His hands, moreover, were large and coarse, without a trace of European refinement, while their colour matched the hues of his complexion. It would therefore have been quite pardonable in a stranger, on

seeing him for the first time, to mistake him for one of the sunburnt Viceroy's of the Sublime Porte.

He was passionately devoted to hunting and music, was fond of cards, and by no means indifferent to wine—in the opinion of some of his visitors it would have been better, perhaps, if he had been more indifferent to the attractions of alcoholic fluids. The two first amusements, however, held the highest places in his estimation. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that as a rule he spent his days in hunting, and returned home in the evening, not to sleep off the fatigues of the chase as our modern Nimrods mostly do, but to regale his soul with the harmony of sweet sounds, either at the opera, where he would stay for hours, or at home, where he delighted to exhibit his own powers. His wife and daughters shared his tastes, and were undoubtedly the most musical royal family in the whole of Europe. The king performed on the violin with considerable execution. His three daughters had each their favourite instrument. Not only were they regularly to be seen in the royal box at the Italian Opera House at Lisbon on Sunday, but Joseph maintained in addition a private opera-house of his own at his country palace of Belem. Wraxall gives some curious particulars with regard to this costly musical toy. It was small in size—the pit holding no more than 150 persons. There were no boxes, properly speaking. A raised gallery, fronting the stage, was reserved for the royal family. At the sides were small inclosures partitioned off from the royal gallery. One of these was allotted to the Patriarch of the Portuguese Church, who was by no means an infrequent attendant, and the other was intended for the use of distinguished foreigners. The pit was usually well filled with foreign ministers, officers, and persons belonging to the court, who were all admitted gratuitously. The most singular feature, however, of this unique opera-house was the total exclusion of the fair sex, with the exception only of the queen and the princesses. The reason officially assigned for this extraordinary regulation was that there were no proper places for their accommodation, but it is obvious that had their presence been really desired, this difficulty could easily have been removed by constructing side-boxes especially for them. It was still more remarkable that the opera should be divested of its principal attraction by their exclusion from the stage, where this reason could scarcely hold good. "Even the ballets," remarks

Wraxall, "were all performed by men or boys, habited in the costumes of nymphs, shepherdesses and goddesses. This exclusion," he continues, "of all females, except the queen and princesses, rendered the spectacle, though otherwise magnificent in machinery and decoration, comparatively insipid, dull, and destitute of animation."

The true secret of this singular rule appears to have been the all-important influence of the green-eyed monster. The queen, though nearly sixty years of age, was as jealous of her husband as a newly-married bride, and not only watched him with argus-eyed vigilance, but took all possible care to remove temptation from his path. She would have no operatic hussies with nimble feet and nightingale throats in such dangerous proximity to the palace, and though the ladies-in-waiting and maids of honour had been so carefully selected with a view to their want of attractions and venerable appearance that they might have been regarded as quite harmless, the queen preferred that they should not be present at the opera-house, where the king's passion for music led him to spend so much of his time. The same motive prompted her to accompany him on the chase. She had the good sense, however, to confine this extreme supervision to his person solely; and though she lacked neither spirit nor ability, at a time when female influence was almost predominant on the continent, Portugal was able to boast an almost complete exemption from it.

There is ample evidence to prove that in the earlier days of their married life the king would scarcely have been justified in complaining that he gave his consort no cause for her jealousy, but it must be equally recorded to his credit that his court was never disgraced by the open scandals which occupy so much of the annals of almost every other European country during the middle of the 18th century.

The queen herself—Marianna Victoria, a daughter of Philip V. of Spain, by the celebrated "Termagant" Elizabeth Farnese of Parma—had at the time of Wraxall's visit completely lost what good looks she might have possessed in earlier youth. Her figure was short and thick, her face red, her nose large, and her manner destitute of softness or elegance. There was indeed nothing feminine in her appearance or demeanour. Nevertheless her eyes, which were dark, lively, and piercing, retained their

original lustre. She wore a profusion of rouge, her neck and shoulders—whether at church, at the opera, or at a bull-feast—being always bare; and she seemed to be not only in the possession of health but capable of supporting the roughest exercise or the most severe fatigue. Her arms were brown and sunburnt from perpetually following the chase, where she must have cut a very singular appearance, for though she was a bold and skilful horsewoman, the Portuguese fashion of riding astride like a man was not calculated to add grace to her stout little person, and she affected moreover a semi-masculine costume, consisting of black English breeches under a short petticoat, a cloth jacket and a cocked hat, which was probably more picturesque than graceful. She was an excellent shot, thought nothing of bringing down a bird flying, and very rarely missed her aim. But her passion for sport on one occasion very nearly resulted in an unexpected tragedy, for she was within an ace of putting the contents of her gun through the head of her spouse—the ball actually grazing his temple.

In the course of his career, moreover, Joseph had two very narrow escapes of assassination. The first of these attempts was mainly due to political motives, and was the outcome of the discontent aroused among the great nobility by the autocratic measures of Pombal. Wraxall asserts that this was the only motive, but Mr. Hay, the English minister at the court of Lisbon, declared in his dispatches to his government that the Marquis of Tavora and the Duke of Aveiro, who were the leaders of the plot, were inspired by the desire to exact vengeance from the king for the dishonour which he had done to their family by his adulterous *liaison* with the young and beautiful Marchioness of Tavora. On the other hand, it is quite certain that the duke and the marquis had endured their dishonour for some years with considerable equanimity, and that it was not until their power was threatened by Pombal that they felt irresistibly impelled to regicide. The assassination of Joseph would have elevated his daughter to the throne, would have insured the triumph of the old order and the fall of the hated minister. It is, however, quite intelligible that they should intrigue against the life of Joseph on political grounds, and when their attempt had failed should seek to palliate the guilt of treason by bringing forward as their excuse the *liaison* between the king and an aban-

doned woman which had been well known to her family for some time, judiciously disregarded or possibly regarded as an honour, but which was unknown both to the nation and the foreign diplomatists; colour, moreover, was given to this excuse by the fact that the king was attacked by the *bravos* of the conspiracy while actually on his way from his palace of Belem to visit his mistress. Incontestible proofs, however, of the political origin of the plot were found in the duke's papers, which were afterwards seized. Among them was discovered an important memorandum in which he lays down the axiom that "to destroy the authority of King Sebastian" (Pombal) "we must first annihilate that of King Joseph." The Tavoras, moreover, were additionally inspired by private pique. The young marquis, who cannot be accused of unduly under-estimating his own merits, had requested a dukedom of the Crown, whether in consideration of his connivance at his wife's *liaison* is not known. The request, however, was really a very extravagant one, for there were only two dukedoms in the whole of the Portuguese peerage, and it is scarcely wonderful, therefore, that the king declined to accede to it. The refusal, however, especially aroused the anger of Tavora's mother, the old marchioness, a haughty, imperious, and pitiless woman, and from that day she entered on a ceaseless war against the royal authority, which culminated in the attack on the king. It was, in fact, to her tireless animosity and relentless will that the plot was mainly due.

It was arranged that five parties of *bravos* should beset the road which led from Belem to the Tavora palace, posting themselves under cover within short distances of each other, with the view that if the king should by mischance escape unhurt through the first or second volleys of his assailants there might yet be three chances of death in his path.

The hand of destiny, however, fought against the House of Tavora; and the king's life was saved by the intrepidity of his coachman. The first party of assassins foolishly allowed the royal carriage to pass them before firing their bullets through the frail structure, and the result was that the shots flew wide. The coachman, hearing the reports and fearing that the king might be wounded, pulled his horses' heads round abruptly and galloped back before the discomfited *bravos* had time to reload, or their comrades had realized what had happened. He drove straight

to the house of the royal surgeon, who soon found that the king had escaped with some slight wounds. This was on the night of September 3, 1758.

The news excited the utmost consternation, which increased to a very high pitch as the days slipped by, and there appeared to be no immediate prospect of discovering the real criminals. It was considered advisable not merely to conceal the real nature of the king's wounds, but even to spread exaggerated reports about them, in the hope of inducing some of the conspirators to show their hands. With the same view the Duke of Aveiro and the Marquis of Tavora, who called daily at the palace to inquire after the king's health—a question of vital importance to them, as we may imagine—were only allowed to see him in a darkened room, where it was impossible for them to ascertain his real condition. Pombal, the true object of their hatred, appears to have suspected them at once. No doubt the wish was father to the thought, for their conviction of such a crime would lend a powerful impetus to his policy by enabling him to crush his principal opponents. He had them watched with untiring vigilance, until at last some imprudent expressions of the duke supplied a real clue which led to the arrest and imprisonment of all the conspirators. It is probable also that the young Marchioness of Tavora may have betrayed her family for her own ends. Not one escaped. The old Marchioness of Tavora was beheaded. The Duke of Aveiro, the Marquis of Tavora, his two sons Luiz and Jose Maria, and some others, suffered the horrible torture of the wheel. The one member of the family of Tavora who escaped the hand of the executioner was the young marchioness, and she, whether in consideration of her innocence, her treachery, or the king's former affection for her, was allowed to retire into a convent. So great was the hatred that Joseph conceived to the very name of his enemies that he commanded that the river Tavora should change its appellation and be known for the future as the "River of Death." By a curious historical parallel, this absurd refinement of revenge was enforced by Catherine II. of Russia on the Cossacks of the Yark, after the suppression of their great revolt under Pougatchef, in 1773. The name of the river Yark was transformed to the Oural, and the district of Yaisk was for the future known to official Russia as Ouralsk.

The second attempt on Joseph's life was due to the tyrannous

exactions of his own domestics, who were accustomed to press private property into the royal service with exactly the same callous disregard for the owner's welfare or convenience that caused such a clamour against the purveyance enforced by the household officials of the later Plantagenet kings. A Portuguese peasant, driven to despair by the forcible seizure of his carts and cattle for the royal use, fell into a frenzy of excitement in which his thoughts dwelt continually on the prospect of vengeance. The result was that he armed himself with a long staff, and making his way to the forest which encircled the palace of Villa Viciosa, lay in wait for the master of the ruffians who had worked his ruin. Then when the king rode by to the chase the infuriated peasant sprang out upon him and attacked him so vigorously that for the second time Joseph had a narrow escape of death.

It was only natural, perhaps, that after these two attempts on his life the king should have been subject to very considerable nervousness and should have adopted the most stringent precautions to avert any similar risks. Even at the Italian opera he did not consider himself safe from the hand of an assassin, and in consequence a wooden corridor was run up between the royal box and the side box from which he was accustomed to view the ballets, in order that he might pass from one to the other without the smallest danger of meeting a hostile weapon by the way.

The court of Lisbon must have been a miserable post for the foreign ministers who were compelled to stay there, and offered but few attractions to the most inquisitive traveller. The king maintained no state at all. Instead of the endless round of splendid ceremonials which made up the weekly programme of the principal courts of Europe, there were merely a few formal and miserable functions on the birthdays of the royal family and the most important festivals of the year. Even when the royal family were present at the opera or the weekly bull-fights, their visits were understood to be strictly incognito. The finance of the court and household was managed on the strictest principles of penny-wise and pound-foolish economy. No less than thirty carriages of the finest Parisian workmanship, which had cost enormous sums when new, lay rotting in the royal mews at Alcantara, while the king and queen were satisfied to be driven about in a common *calèche* or chase drawn by two very ordinary

mules, and actually used this disgraceful equipage for comparatively grand occasions, even for their visits to the bull-fights. When the queen and her daughters wished to attend mass, however, or to perform their devotions at some church in the vicinity of Lisbon, the mules were not called into requisition. Their places were taken by two scraggy horses, and the dilapidated harness, which served for state occasions, was replaced by a set so old and worn that even the driver of a London hackney coach would be ashamed of it. No one, in fact, would have dreamt that such a turn-out could possibly be of royal ownership if it were not for the escort of forty horse-guards which usually accompanied it.

The palace of Belem, which formed the favourite residence of the king, was only a miserable wooden barrack erected on the banks of the Tagus a few miles out of Lisbon and nearer the sea. Its fragile nature, however, was due to historical causes, in short to the terrible earthquake of 1755, which had destroyed half of Lisbon. Experience showed that solidly-constructed houses had proved so many death-traps to their owners; and as earthquakes were always a possibility of the future in Portugal, the people preferred to live in lightly-built structures of wood which would not offer such fatal resistance to the shocks or cause such destruction in their fall. The king, in imitation of his subjects, avoided the older and more massive palaces, preferring the less dangerous if less imposing bungalow at Belem. At carnival time, however, the court moved up the river to the palace of *Salva Tierra*, where it remained till March, occupying the days with elaborate hunting-parties, to which all foreigners of distinction were invited, and the evenings with grand performances at the opera, which were open gratuitously to all who had been presented to the king. This was the one bright spot in the monotonous dulness of the royal programme throughout the year.

This unusual parsimony was no doubt in great measure due to actual poverty, or rather to the mismanagement which allowed the royal revenues to be exhausted in illegitimate channels, and thereby produced an artificial appearance of financial distress. Joseph's revenue really amounted to two millions sterling, of which only half was applied to the national expenditure, leaving one million, therefore, for his own private use. It is true that £40,000 were devoted annually to the maintenance of the opera, but the

surplus which remained was too large to be accounted for except by gross speculation and mismanagement. To such an extent, moreover, did these evils pervade the whole machinery of the royal household that the footmen who followed the king's carriage were frequently left almost without the means of subsistence.

The principal source of amusement was the weekly bull-fights, which were held every Sunday during the summer and autumn. In 1772 these bloodthirsty pastimes were quite peculiar to Portugal, for they had been abolished in Spain by the enlightened Charles III. some thirteen years previously. They were, however, revived again in the latter country towards the close of this century, and the unsavoury preëminence of Portugal was thereby removed. King Joseph and Queen Marianna were so excessively fond of the national sport that they allowed nothing but illness to prevent their attendance. To such an extent, in fact, did Joseph carry his passion for these brutal exhibitions, that even when one of his eyes was swollen and bandaged, owing to injuries received from "a spark that had flown into it from the flint of his fowling-piece when firing it at the chase," still, without any regard for his patched and dilapidated appearance, he was visible as usual in the royal box that same day when the matadores trooped in to the fray.

The scene of these contests was a large wooden building of the circus type, containing a spacious arena surrounded by banks of seats rising one behind the other to a considerable height, the whole bearing a humble resemblance to the Coliseum at Rome. The seats were divided into pit and boxes, the latter having the advantage in altitude and being reserved for the more illustrious among the spectators. "Those persons," observes Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, "who have formed their ideas of bull-feasts from the entertaining descriptions of the Countess D'Aulnoi, which she has enlivened by humorous as well as by tragical adventures, would have esteemed the diversion tame as it was exhibited at Lisbon in the presence of Joseph. Yet it was not altogether divested of something that reminded me of the tournaments and exercises of chivalry with which our imaginations are so warmly impressed in youth . . . . When the champion who was about to engage the bull, gaily dressed, mounted on a spirited horse, his spear in his hand, appeared upon the ground, the effect of the spectacle is not easy to describe in adequate terms.

From sixteen to twenty bulls were regularly sacrificed every Sunday, and though circular pieces of leather were fastened on their horns in order to prevent their ripping up or mortally wounding the combatants, yet I have witnessed many very severe and several nearly fatal accidents. Prodigious dexterity and vigour were displayed by some of the horsemen, particularly by a Castilian, whom I have often seen drive his spear at the first thrust direct to the bull's heart when the animal was running furiously at him. The amphitheatre then rang with applause. It frequently happened that the bulls wanted spirit or inclination for the contest. In those cases the spectacle became rather a butchery than a combat or amusement, but some of them would not have disgraced a Roman amphitheatre if (as I have been assured was customary a century earlier) their horns instead of being blunted or covered had been filed and sharpened to a point. Several of the men who fought on foot exhibited extraordinary agility and coolness in eluding the rage of the incensed animal; but it must be remembered that they were commonly six or seven combined, all armed with long spears. I have seen women engage the bull, ride up and wound him. Two in particular, who were *dancerinas*, or posture-girls, one a Venetian, the other a Spaniard, habited as men and sitting astride, possessed great firmness and excited general admiration. Sometimes the bulls were furnished by the court. I have beheld twenty killed in the course of three hours, eight of which were given by the king, as many more by Don Pedro his brother, two by the Duke of Cadaval and two by the Patriarch of Lisbon."

Wraxall confesses that to foreign and unaccustomed eyes these butcheries were really a disgusting sight, when once the feeling of curiosity and novelty had worn off. The Portuguese, however, regarded them with very different sentiments; and if the spectacles themselves in some faint and feeble degree recalled the great "games men played with death" in the vast amphitheatre of Imperial Rome, there is no doubt that a spectator who witnessed for the first time the keen excitement of the populace of Lisbon during the chances and mischances of the bull-fight, would go away with a more real appreciation of the strange mixture of ferocious passions which prompted the cry of the Roman proletariat, "*Panem et circenses*."

Nor was the love of this inhuman sport confined to the male

sex alone. Innumerable crowds of women formed a very large portion of the audience. The queen and her three daughters set the example. The great ladies of the realm and the beauties of the day made a brave show in the boxes, and in the intervals of flirtation exhibited as much interest in the struggles of the bull and the cruel agility of his tormentors as fashionable ladies in our own capital display when a leading counsel denounces some quivering wretch in the dock of the Old Bailey, or the judge assumes the black cap. They enjoyed themselves in fact thoroughly, and were far more acquainted with the science of the game than the majority of English ladies are with our own national pastime of cricket. The pit, moreover, was thronged with citizenesses in their gayest attire, who were almost as much delighted with the toilettes of the donnas in the boxes as in the programme of the day.

The bull-fights usually ended about six, and at the close the royal party went straight from the amphitheatre to the Italian Opera House, which was situated in the same quarter of Lisbon. The king as a rule was attired "in a full-trimmed suit of silk or cloth, either quite plain or embroidered with white silk." On his head he wore a flowing tie-wig; on his breast reposed the Portuguese Order of Christ. The queen and her daughters were profusely bedecked with diamonds—the eldest, the Princess of Brazil, being especially conspicuous for the number and brilliance of the precious stones that glittered on her person. The queen's charms were further enhanced as usual by a liberal layer of rouge, a decoration which her daughters dispensed with; but it is only fair to the royal dame to remind the reader that during the eighteenth century there were very few ladies of fashion in what were considered the civilized countries, who were bold enough to eschew the use of paints and cosmetics, and that many celebrated beauties of the period undoubtedly shortened their lives by an immoderate application of injurious substances to their skin.

During the progress of the ballets the king usually left his family seated in the place of honour, and retired by the covered passage described above to his own side-box, on the pretext that from thence he was able to get a better view; but he appears to have taken advantage of his brief escape from the vigilant eye of his spouse to make such a thorough investigation, by the help of

his opera-glass, of the charms of the ladies congregated in the side-boxes, that he can scarcely have had much time for observing the evolutions of the *danseuses* on the stage. "These little excursions," says Sir Nathaniel in his delightfully quaint fashion, "he always seemed to enjoy." A few noblemen usually accompanied him, of whom the Count de Prado, though by no means the most illustrious of the nobility, was—and perhaps partly for that reason—the most distinguished by royal favour. He alone was permitted to be seated in the royal presence, and the king chatted with him on the most familiar terms.

No doubt he was the recipient of the royal jokes and stories when Joseph was disposed to be facetious or scandalous, and he probably was possessed to the full of the king's opinion of the more prominent of his female subjects.

The Count de Cantineida and the Count D'Arcos were the next in favour, and an amusing illustration of the backward state of Portuguese manners and customs may be gathered from the fact that when the king wished to confer a special mark of favour on the Count de Cantineida, he granted him the right of driving a coach-and-six—an honour worthy of the burlesque court of Haiti.

The three princesses who have been so frequently referred to were named respectively Maria, Maria Anna and Maria Benedicta; of whom Maria Benedicta was the most beautiful, Maria Anna the most accomplished, and Maria, the Princess of Brazil, the heir-presumptive to the throne—an attribute which in the eyes of many far outweighed her other defects, great as they were.

In person the Princess of Brazil was tall and slender, with prominent and disagreeable features, pale and wan complexion, and a melancholy expression—altogether by no means an attractive creature. She was possessed, moreover, by a gloomy and severe spirit of superstitious bigotry, which was so strongly allied to insanity that it is scarcely wonderful that it finally assumed the latter shape. In 1792 she fell into a hopeless state of idiocy, screaming violently in the most frightful manner at the approach of any stranger. Her superstitious prejudices may be said to have caused the death of her eldest son, Joseph, the Prince of Beyra, who died of smallpox at the early age of twenty-seven—his decease being directly due to his mother's refusal to

allow him to be fortified against that terrible disease by inoculation. The supposed state-necessity of averting all possibility of a disputed succession to the throne made her the victim of an unnatural union with her uncle, Don Pedro, the younger brother of Joseph I., who was the next male heir. It must, however, be understood that an union of this kind is by no means uncommon among the Peninsular dynasties, and that the princess gave a very willing consent. She was, in fact, very fond of her youthful uncle, and was perfectly satisfied to marry him. Their wedded life was happy and was blessed with children. The princess proved an exemplary wife and mother. Such a marriage, however, so repugnant to morality and contrary to nature, was ill-adapted to counteract the strong strain of insanity which had run for centuries in the blood of the dynasties of Spain and Portugal, nor was it likely that the progeny would be healthy or fruitful.

If political necessities may be urged as an excuse in this case, there is absolutely none, public or private, than can be advanced for the equally extraordinary and revolting alliance effected between the young Prince of Beyra, eldest son of the Princess of Brazil, a boy of fifteen, and his aunt Maria Benedicta, who, though still attractive, had passed the age of thirty-one. Such a marriage was calculated to defeat its own ends, and it is not surprising that it did not result in any issue, though the strangely-mated couple lived together very amicably for twelve years.

*(To be concluded.)*

## In Black and White.

By B. L. T.

### PART I.

"Hôtel Grande Bretagne,

"Bellagio,

"Lake of Como,

"September 20th.

"DEAR TOM,

"I expect your congratulations by return of post. Miss Beatrice Summerton is mine—at least she will be before the beginning of next season if the course of true love runs as smooth as it promises to do at present; it hasn't run as smoothly as it might all through the summer. Mamma was aiming at higher game than your humble servant, but Beatrice (God bless her!) tells me *she* has been of the same mind all along. I am the happiest fellow in Europe, bar none, and the luckiest. You don't know her. When you do you will agree with me, in spite of your cynical opinions on the holy and blessed estate. Still I think even you will admit that youth, beauty, and £5,000 a year (though the coin has had no influence with me on this occasion) are worth giving up a portion of one's liberty for. No time for more, as my *fiancée* is waiting for me to explore the beauties of the neighbourhood with her.

"Yours sincerely,

"J. FLEMINGE.

"P.S.—I wish you would keep an eye on Diana Vernon and let me know how things are in that quarter."

Captain Flemynge folded his epistle and addressed it to "T. Newton, Esq.,—Club, St. James's," and strolled out into the hall, where he delivered it to the safe keeping of the porter. He then proceeded to ascend to the first floor, and tapping at a door was bidden to enter in a clear girlish voice. Advancing to the middle of the room he became aware that his betrothed was not alone.

Seated on one of the yellow satin chairs that formed part of the gorgeous suite of furniture of the apartment, and which contrasted pleasantly with a vivid crimson paper, relieved by gilded mirrors and huge ormolu candelabra, sat a youth of some two-and-twenty summers. The tasteful mixture of colours with which the hotel-keeper of sunny Italy seeks to reconcile the unwary Saxon to paying double for his apartments, made his young but slightly used-up-looking countenance appear more pasty than it naturally was. He was not bad-looking, but an air of insufferable conceit pervaded his whole personality, and inspired Captain Flemynge with an almost unconquerable desire to acquaint him with the quality of his neat brown shoe leather.

The fair Beatrice's countenance wore an expression of frigid politeness, and the conversation appeared to be languishing slightly when her betrothed entered.

Her brilliant face lit up with a charming smile as her eyes met his.

"I am not sure if you know Lord Thirston, Captain Flemynge," she said.

Captain Flemynge did not, except by reputation, and what he knew of that did not dispose him too cordially towards the occupant of the yellow satin chair; moreover he was aware that Lord Thirston had found favour in the eyes of Beatrice's parent, and the knowledge of who his *fiancée's* visitor was increased the sensations about the region of his Russia leather toes.

"What the devil are *you* doing here?" was the mental remark of both men as they stiffly bowed.

"Lord Thirston was staying at Cadenabbia, and heard we were here," explained Beatrice, divining the drift of her lover's thoughts.

"I heard at Homburg you were staying here, Miss Summer-ton," said the youth.

"And Homburg being only a step, you thought you might as well come over and pay your respects," said Flemynge drily.

Beatrice looked at him imploringly. She wished now that she had not promised her mother to keep their engagement a comparative secret till they returned to London; it would have spared her Lord Thirston's unwelcome attentions at any rate. If the visitor was unwelcome to her he was a thousand times more so to Captain Jack Flemynge, who perceived that his afternoon

was spoilt. The unwelcome one had clearly no sort of intention of taking his departure. He seemed glued to that yellow satin chair. "If the fellow only knew how infernally bilious his complexion looked!" mentally ejaculated the fuming lover.

But "the fellow" appeared very well satisfied with his complexion, and was under the impression that he was making himself uncommonly agreeable; and Captain Jack gnawed his moustache and cursed him in his heart in vain. By and by it seemed to him that Beatrice was actually encouraging the man; he could not have believed her capable of it. Was it possible that she was a flirt? The idea had struck him once or twice before when he had as yet been in a state of far from pleasing uncertainty as to his own chances; but since—no, it was not possible—and yet it looked uncommonly like it.

Poor Beatrice, not wholly unconscious of the thoughts which his ingenuous countenance was not calculated to disguise, was trying with all her might to be decently civil to her inconvenient admirer, and devoutly wishing him at the bottom of the Lake of Como.

Captain Flemynge, unable any longer to contain himself, and conscious that glowering in a chair did not further his desires or hasten his rival's departure, betook himself to the balcony, and simultaneously Mrs. Summerton gushed into the room. Under cover of a cascade of greetings Beatrice escaped and joined him.

"What's she up to now?" he inquired, jerking his head in the direction of the torrent of sounds.

"I don't know. Perhaps she thinks that while there is life there is hope," replied the girl with a joyous laugh.

Her future happiness looked so secure she could afford to make a joke of it. Captain Flemynge laughed too. He looked down at her golden head and peachy cheek, and possessed himself of a little hand that lay carelessly on the stone balustrade. They were screened from the view of the two inside, so he held it, and lightly stroked it with the other hand.

"He has spoilt our afternoon (d— him!)," he said, relieving himself by putting in the parenthesis under his breath.

"Yes," said Beatrice slowly, gazing wistfully out over the sapphire lake to the blue masses of the hills deepened to amethyst where the cloud-shadows lay across them. "Never mind; our expedition to Varena must come off to-morrow."

But neither to-morrow, nor the next day, nor the next, did the expedition take place. The morrow was wet ; the day after Lord Thirston turned up again ; and the day after Mrs. Summerton had arranged a trip to Lecco. Jack fumed in vain ; he and his lady-love had scarcely had a moment to themselves.

At length a day arrived—a day to which no exception could be taken on the score of weather—and with apparently no obstacles in prospect to carrying out their long-delayed plans. Beatrice announced her intention of making their expedition to Varena, and this time she declared no power on earth should upset it ; mamma might stay at home if she did not care to go, and to Jack's infinite delight mamma declared nothing would make her trust herself to the tender mercies of Italians in an open boat.

They started at twelve o'clock, Beatrice arrayed in the smartest of white flannel gowns and with the neatest of sailor hats perched on her golden locks. As they left the hotel the porter handed a letter to Captain Flemynge. He opened and perused it as he followed his *fiancée* across the garden to the landing-place.

"Confound the fellow, what a coarse way he has of putting things !" he muttered to himself as he hastily thrust the letter into the pocket of the cloak he carried over his arm.

He soon forgot the momentary annoyance his correspondence had caused in the joy of unrestrained conversation with the lady of his choice. Beatrice was in the highest spirits, and looked her prettiest. The blue of the waves was reflected in her dancing eyes, and the sunshine burnished her hair to a still brighter gold. The mountains were intensely yet softly blue, and veiled with a transparent haze that gave the idea of even greater height and distance to the far-off peaks, the topmost of which glittered white against the glowing sky with a first-fall of autumn snow. The lake was a mingling of liquid sapphire and amethyst, too purple for the one, too blue for the other—a blending of the two that had colours in it like a peacock's neck. All the intensest colouring of an Italian September glowed on hillside, and wave, and sky. The little town they were approaching was set like a cluster of pearls against the velvety softness of the misty hills at whose foot it lies. The slender shaft of the campanile shone white against the mountain side, its blue shadows and stains of reds and orange looking like the iridescent hues of mother-of-

pearl on its weather-beaten walls. The bare chain of rocks that raise their pinnacles behind Bellagio over Lake Lecco glowed like walls and battlements of gold in the blaze of sunshine.

They landed at the little inn whose steps descend into the lake. Beatrice was proof against the blandishments of mine host, who would have had them stop and dine, being under the not altogether erroneous impression that "Inglesi" make expeditions for the purpose of eating.

"I couldn't eat, could you?" she said, turning impulsively to her betrothed. "It is far too lovely to think of food, isn't it?"

Captain Flemynge assented warmly, albeit he was possessed of a healthy appetite as a general rule. On this occasion his sole desire was to be alone with his love, and such coarse considerations as luncheon were out of place in his present exalted frame of mind.

They passed under the dark old stone archway, overgrown with maidenhair and mosses, into the streets of the little town all ablaze with light and warmth of sunshine. Down the narrow alleys which led in steps to the water they caught glimpses of blue and glittering waves, with the broad dark leaves of a fig-tree spreading over white walls, its green and purple balls of fruit almost dropping into the lake. Brilliant flutterings of orange and blue and scarlet waved from dark-barred windows, or hung across the narrow streets that were nothing but uneven rocky staircases. The warmth and light and colour of it all had its effect even on Jack's unpoetic mind, open, however, at this moment to the elevating influences of inanimate beauty by the very animate charms at his side.

"We don't get anything like this in England," he said at last when they had cleared the streets and were ascending the rough road that led upwards between stone walls and shadows of chestnut boughs to the ruin that crowns the steep overhanging the town. They had paused a moment to take breath and were looking down on the glorious landscape below.

"No, indeed!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Jack, *would* you care to live in Italy? How heavenly it would be!"

"I would live anywhere with you, my darling," he said tenderly, and there being nobody in sight but a withered old crone with a striped handkerchief over her head at work in an

adjoining field, he took advantage of the situation and the momentary elevation of the gauze veil that protected Beatrice's peach-like skin, to approach his lips to hers—somewhat timidly, however, as the damsel was apt to be sparing of her favours. However, to-day her mood seemed chastened, or the warmth of an Italian sun had penetrated her veins, for she had not only allowed herself to be embraced but permitted her head to rest against his shoulder as she meditatively followed the movements of a lizard, who, emboldened by their stillness, was eyeing them curiously round the corner of a fragment of rock.

And to his credit Jack Flemynge meant what he had said. He was honestly and overhead and ears in love, and the thought of his *fiancée's* fortune was more a trouble than a joy to him. Without being very rich he was fairly well off, in spite of a taste for horse flesh, which wise people, especially the elders of his own family, said would one day land him somewhere he had not bargained for. Perhaps it might, but at present there appeared no prospect of it. So far he had been a lucky man, and the old adage of "lucky at play," &c., had proved singularly false in his case. It never struck him that fate might have a revenge in store for him. He was not given to forebodings, but took his life as it came, and enjoyed it amazingly; and the little trifling thorns which border the path of even the happiest of mortals he plucked out and cast aside without more than a passing thought given to the annoyance their scratches caused. He was in the enjoyment of the best of health, and gave society the benefit of the kindly temper that resulted from the possession of a good digestion and an excellent heart. It did not occur to him, as the blooming cheek of his bride-elect rested against his shoulder, that the gods might justly demand some sacrifice in compensation for such an unwarrantable length of lease in the happiness of a mere mortal. Beatrice, more open to impressions, gloomy or otherwise, felt a sudden misgiving. The world at present seemed too radiantly fair; the past had been too dangerously bright.

She raised her head and looked up in her lover's face. What she saw there ought to have satisfied her.

"Do you think we shall always be as happy as we are now?" she said. "Will you always care for me?"

"Always," replied Jack with conviction.

She believed him; she was only nineteen, and life was at its best.

Her softer mood vanished with her momentary misgivings, and no one could have reproached her with being too lavish of her caresses for the rest of that afternoon. Still they were supremely happy. They explored the ruin and rested from their climb on the grey stone wall looking out over that glorious view of lake and mountain glowing with the intense colouring of a southern early autumn. It was late when they descended again into the little town, and mine host found them more amenable to his suggestions of omelettes and coffee. They sat in the loggia of the little inn that juts into the lake, at a tiny table with steaming coffee, purple figs piled on their leaves, a flask of ruby "Chianti" completing this poetic little meal. The sun was getting low, and already the great shadow of the mountain above Cadenabbia fell across the lake, purpling the blue waters; up from behind its shoulder shot lances and spears of gold, and the rocky pinnacles opposite turned orange and amethyst, and flamed in the sunset with vermillion streaks and rents, as though volcanic fires were bursting from the summits. The vine-leaves twining round the pillars of the verandah had caught the tints of autumn; in the strip of garden that overhung the water, pomegranates were ripening, and yellow balls hung among the glossy orange-leaves, through which glittered the liquid sapphire of the lake, strewn with oleander petals, like tiny boats of pink pearl rocked on the miniature waves that began to lap the shore as the breeze stirred the leaves and sighed amongst the myrtles.

Sitting there facing the sunset glow, they did not see the clouds that crept downwards from the Alps and that had already wrapped the far end of the lake in gloom.

One of the boatmen came up and addressed Beatrice, telling her that they ought to start if they did not wish to be caught in a storm.

"What's the fellow talking about?" inquired Captain Flemynge, not too pleased at the unseemly interruption of their *little-à-little*, which the Italian would have been far too polite and sympathetic to disturb except under pressing circumstances.

"He says there is going to be a storm, and we have hardly time to get home before it bursts," replied his *fiancée*. "I shall be horribly frightened if we are caught in it. Do let us go at once Jack!"

"Of course you shall go, my darling," he replied, rising and

inspecting the weather. "It does look pretty bad over there," he continued, returning, and calling loudly for the bill.

"We have had such a lovely day. I shall never forget this little place," said Beatrice, lingering to take a last look, as Jack, having become his practical self again, hurried her down the steps to the boat.

In vain. They had lingered too long, and before they had rowed a mile a vivid flash of lightning tore the black curtain of clouds in two, and made every peak stand out illuminated against the gathering gloom; large drops began to fall and the wind to rise before the last echo of the thunder-peal had died amongst the hills. Jack wrapped Beatrice hurriedly in his cloak, and gave his mind to steering as well as he could with one hand, whilst he kept the other arm round his *fiancée*, who was too terrified even to notice the presence of the boatmen. Luckily the wind was behind them, and they soon rounded the rocky and wooded promontory which rises above the little town of Bellagio. The lightning was blinding when it flashed across the dense curtain of clouds and torrents of rain; in the intervals it was pitch dark. It was nearly eight o'clock, and the evenings were fast drawing in. Beatrice kept her face hidden on his shoulder, and declined to look up; she was no heroine, and was not in the least ashamed of her fright. At length they reached the landing-place. Beatrice raised her head, and as immediately dropped it again, covering her eyes as a fork of light seemed to strike the crest of the mountain opposite, and lit up the tossing waters with a ghastly blue glare. Captain Flemynge lifted her out of the boat and almost carried her up the steps and across the garden to the hotel. Mrs. Summerton met them, heaping reproaches on Jack for allowing her daughter to be caught in the storm, and nearly frightening her to death with anxiety. Dripping and dejected he stood in the brilliantly-lighted hall, as mamma bore her daughter upstairs, having made him feel as guilty and miserable as the heart of woman could desire. Even Beatrice was too dazed with the lights, and too overwhelmed with her mother's torrent of hysterical greetings and reproaches, to cast a glance his way.

She was hurried to her room, undressed, dosed with homœopathic camphor, and obliged to remain upstairs for the rest of the evening. Half-an-hour later Captain Flemynge, knocking at the door of their sitting-room, was told she would dine upstairs

and remain in her room; and mamma, having banished the unfortunate lover for that evening, repaired to her daughter's room to inflict fresh remedies against cold.

Beatrice was sitting in a low arm-chair, her damp golden hair falling over her shoulders, and her person arranged in pink cashmere and lace and ribbons. She did not move as her parent entered. Mrs. Summerton gave a gasp as she came forward and saw her face. She was white as the lace on her gown, and her eyes were riveted in a stony stare on an open letter in her hand.

"Beatrice," ejaculated her mother. The girl sprang up as if she had been shot.

"Read that," she exclaimed, going rapidly across the room to where her mother stood. She was pale no longer; her eyes burned and her cheeks flamed; she stood before her parent clenching and unclenching her hands and quivering from head to foot.

"Read it!" she insisted, as Mrs. Summerton continued to stare at her. "It fell from the pocket of his cloak—I saw my name—I could not help it."

Mrs. Summerton began to see daylight.

"Read it aloud," continued her daughter, "so that I may be sure I have made no mistake."

Mrs. Summerton did as she was told.

"DEAR JACK,

"I congratulate you on having hooked the heiress; Miss Summerton's £5,000 a year is worth saying good-bye to liberty for, even in my estimation, and you know my views on matrimony. I did as you asked me about Diana Vernon; she is in fine form: skin like satin, eyes like a gazelle—a perfect picture.

"Lucky dog, with the fair heiress in prospect and Diana in the hand! I envy you the latter the most of the two, in spite of the five thou. A wife can never be got rid of; a Diana may, should she disappoint our fondest hopes. Good-bye, old man.

"Yours always,

"T. NEWTON."

"It only shows," said Mrs. Summerton with fearful calmness, as she folded the letter, "what I have *always* said—what BRUTES men are!"

Beatrice's excitement had given way to tears ; she had sunk back in her chair in a passion of sobs.

"I will not see him—I will have no explanations!" she gasped. "We must leave here to-morrow. I can never look at him again. And to think how idiotically happy I was only this afternoon!" she added, with a fresh torrent of tears.

"Leave him to me, my dear," said her mother. "It is too revolting to think that such a letter should have met your eyes. Diana! Faugh!"

"I couldn't help seeing the first lines, and then I read on," sobbed Beatrice. "It was lying open on the floor ; it must have fallen from his cloak when I took it off."

"It is lucky you have discovered him in time," said Mrs. Summerton. "I look upon it as an interposition of Providence. Think what your life might have been with such a wretch. Ah! if you had listened to me from the first——!"

Beatrice, her head still buried in the cushions of the chair, made an impatient movement ; she was in no mood for a sermon with "I told you so" for the text.

Her mother, after several requests that she might be left to herself, went back to the sitting-room. She was not ill-pleased at the unexpected turn things had taken ; she had never cared for Captain Flemynge as a son-in-law. She was not a bad-hearted woman on the whole, but she had had exalted views for her daughter, and now it seemed she was again to be permitted to hope for their realization. She determined to be prompt, and to allow no time for softenings or possible explanations, not that she admitted to herself that any explanation was possible in the face of that damning epistle. She made inquiries, and found that by crossing by an early steamer to Menaggio she could get to Lugano and join the St. Gothard express, and thus they would be far away almost before Captain Flemynge would think of stirring. Beatrice, smarting and writhing under the blow her pride and her love had received, raised no objections ; all she cared for was to go away.

## PART II.

WHEN Captain Flemynge descended to the coffee-room for breakfast next morning, he did so with a healthy appetite and

with no foreboding of coming disaster. Beatrice and her mother always breakfasted upstairs, and were seldom visible till 10.30. When he had finished his repast he went slowly upstairs, and tapped at the door of his *fiancée's* sitting-room. There was no answer. He pushed the door open and went in. Evidences of a hasty evacuation met his gaze. All the photographs and knick-knacks with which Beatrice loved to litter her rooms, even when on the march, were swept away; two or three sheets of tissue paper floated about the room, and lay on the carpet; through an open door he could see the toilet-table despoiled of its silver-topped bottles—a blank. Captain Flemynge retreated to the door. Could he have mistaken the number, and were there two rooms in the hotel furnished with those hideous yellow satin chairs, that seemed to glare at him in all their empty and unmitigated ugliness? No, the number was there; he had not been mistaken.

Of course! He had it! They had changed their rooms. He would go down and inquire the number of their new apartments.

Downstairs he went accordingly, and inquired in the office. The manager looked surprised. Did monsieur not know? The ladies had left that morning. He had a letter for M. le Capitaine.

Captain Flemynge took the letter without a word. He walked out into the garden. Some instinct made him refrain from reading it in public, though as yet no thought of what awaited him formed itself in his mind. He withdrew to the farthest end of the strip of garden that lay between the hotel and the road and tore it open. The unlucky letter, whose very existence he had forgotten, fell to the ground. The other was in Mrs. Summerton's writing.

"I enclose a letter which fell from the pocket of your coat, and which my daughter begs me to return to you. She desires me to say that she will neither hear nor receive any explanations, and considers the engagement at an end. I can only add my thankfulness that an accident should have spared my child the misery of being married for her money.

"MARY SUMMERTON."

Captain Flemynge crushed the letter in his hand and flung it

far out into the lake. His first impulse was to follow them, his second was one of grief, and disappointment, and above all wounded pride to think that his Beatrice could believe he had lied like any miserable fortune-hunter when he had told her that he loved her. She could not have really cared for him, or a few idle words written by another man could never have turned her against him. Then his old jealousy of his rival, Lord Thirston, came back to him, and the times when Beatrice had seemed cold and had repelled his lover-like ardour; he had thought it maidenly shyness then, and liked her none the worse for not being too lavish of her favours. Now these things took a different complexion. His pride was aroused, and he had a great deal. A fortune-hunter was a being for whom he had a thorough and manly contempt, and the idea that any one, most of all the woman he loved, could apply the term to him, stung him into a state of feeling in which he cursed all womankind for their shallowness and want of faith, and worked himself into the conviction that Beatrice had only thrown him over for a rival.

The very remembrance of yesterday's happiness made him more bitter, and he swore in the depths of his wounded soul never to attempt a reconciliation with one who could so little trust him. Nevertheless he was very miserable, and in spite of his resolution he could not refrain from inquiring if any address had been left for letters. There was none; Mrs. Summerton had taken care of that. Captain Flemynge lingered till the next day, and finally turned his back on Como, and travelled straight through to London.

### PART III.

THE enclosure at Ascot was gay with lovely toilettes, and crowded with London's prettiest and smartest women, for it was the day of days—the "Cup Day." Among the smartest and prettiest none was more daintily apparelled or looked more charming than Beatrice Summerton. Her complexion was brilliant and her eyes bright as ever, and perhaps no one noticed a certain hardness in her manner, though some virtuous matrons *did* notice a greater tendency to indiscriminate flirtation; but these had daughters who had no temptations that way, and their own absence of occupation gave them time to lament the shortcomings of their neighbours' offspring.

To-day, Beatrice had put on her gayest mood with her smartest gown, and she was the centre of an admiring group of which Lord Thirston formed one, and evidently the most favoured one. In fact, it was said that their engagement was an open secret, or at any rate was only a matter of time.

"Here, Newton," said Lord Thirston, catching hold of a man who passed. "I must go and look after my money. Will you take care of Miss Summerton, and get her some lunch?"

The man to whom this whisper was addressed joined the group, having been duly introduced to the fair heiress. He had not met her before, though he knew her well by name, and moreover he knew his letter had fallen into her hands, and had been the cause of inflicting a cruel blow on his dearest friend. Did she know he was the man? Anyhow he could not help himself. Thirston had introduced him before he had time to make his escape. Beatrice, however, was serenely unconscious; she had not even caught his name, and she accepted his invitation to go in search of lunch unhesitatingly. They made their way to one of the tents, and sat down. A sudden paleness had spread itself over Beatrice's blooming cheek and did not escape Tom Newton's quick eye. He had also caught sight of Jack Flemynge, and had skilfully manœuvred to avoid a collision. It was the first time Beatrice had seen him since he had lifted her from the boat, dripping and frightened to death, at the landing-steps at Bellaggio. Any vague hopes of explanations or reconciliation she had entertained in spite of her flight had long since dwindled away. His silence proved his guilt, but still a very sharp pang shot through her as she caught sight of him, and she shook all over as she took the tumbler of champagne Tom promptly brought her. He did his best to be as agreeable as he could, and Beatrice replied with a forced gaiety to his efforts to be entertaining.

"Won't you have a bet with me on the Cup race?" he said, when he found her sufficiently recovered. "What horse do you back? Or do you choose hap-hazard and trust to your guardian angel to pull you through?"

He handed her a race-card as he spoke.

Beatrice glanced down it. Tom looked up suddenly from the quail he was dissecting, and beheld her with her eyes fixed in a stare on the card, white as the unprinted surface.

A man passed at that moment, clapped him on the shoulder, and said, "Hullo, Newton!"

Beatrice looked up. It all flashed across her. She held out the card with a shaking hand.

"Captain Flemynge is a friend of yours, is he not? Is he the man referred to here?"

She pointed to the list of horses. Staring at her in letters that seemed to burn her eyes as she looked was *his* name and——

"Diana Vernon by Rob Roy out of Helen Macgregor!"

Tom Newton was quick of comprehension; he read in her white face and startled eyes the whole silly mistake his unlucky letter had caused, though how she could be such a fool as to have been taken in almost passed his comprehension, or how she could have remained so ignorant of racing matters with Jack for a *fiancé*.

"Yes, that is Jack," he said innocently. "He was very anxious about Diana when he was abroad last autumn."

Beatrice remained pale and silent, cursing her folly and want of trust now that it was too late. Was it too late? Tom Newton watched her, guessing all that was passing in her mind and wishing to Heaven he knew what to do. The great race was even then being run; the luncheon tent had emptied; they were almost alone. Tom forgot the race, forgot everything but his anxiety to set things right between the two people he knew still cared for each other, and for whose separation he felt he was the cause, although a perfectly innocent one.

"Look here, Miss Summerton," he blurted out at last at the risk of receiving a snub for his impertinence, "I wrote a stupid letter to Jack last year which fell into your hands. I don't make any excuse for the idiotic remarks I made except that I am given that way, and at that time I didn't know you. I see you have been suffering and making Jack suffer for a mistake it never entered into either of our heads you could have made. I never saw a fellow more cut up than Jack was, and he has not got over it yet, but he is (I beg your pardon for the expression) infernally proud, and your mother's letter was to the point. No man likes being accused of being a fortune-hunter, and the idea that Diana was the cause of your giving him his *congé* never entered into either of our wooden heads. I daresay you will think me very impertinent—but at all events I have cleared my conscience with regard to that idiotic letter."

Beatrice looked up; her brilliant colour had come back, and her eyes sparkled softly.

"I forgive you," she said, holding out her hand. "You may inflict what penance you please on me."

"I will let you off with a promise to read 'Rob Roy' as an introduction to a course of Walter Scott, who is too much neglected by the present generation," he replied.

The next day CaptainFlemynge received a note enclosing a crumpled race-card with his horse's name underlined, and across the back was written, "If you are of the same mind as you were last September, send me one line to say you forgive me."

That line was never written, but Mrs. Summerton returning from a round of visits that afternoon was treated to an impromptu tableau in her own drawing-room that dashed her hopes of a peeress's coronet for her daughter into hopeless fragments, and taught her the futility of meddling with what is written in the book of fate.

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## A Homburg Beauty.

A NOVEL.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

Author of "A CRACK COUNTY," "MATRON OR MAID," "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE MYSTERY OF A WOMAN'S HEART," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER XXX.

FLOWN FROM THE PARENT NEST.

AN hour later, Mrs. Davidson returned to the hotel, not having been successful in finding Lady Penywern at home.

Mr. Davidson looked up as she entered the room.

"Where is Hetty?" he demanded.

"Oh! don't ask me," responded his better half, plumping herself down into the nearest armchair, and catching up a newspaper wherewith to fan her moist, red face. "I know nothing about her. The fact is, since you've taken to interfering, and giving the girl leave to go here, there, and everywhere alone, I'm reduced to a perfect cipher, and no longer possess the slightest authority over my own child. A pretty pass things have come to."

"Was not Hetty at Miss Dawkins's, Emma?"

"No, she wasn't, John; and, moreover, she has not been there all day. What she's about, goodness only knows; but you can't expect me to go rampaging up and down the town after her, especially in this hot weather, so I thought I'd just come home and tell you how your daughter is deceiving you."

His face darkened, and the perpendicular line between his eyebrows deepened until it became an ugly furrow.

"Hetty must have told me a story," he said, "for she distinctly stated that she wanted to see Miss Dawkins."

"Depend upon it, that was only an excuse. If the truth were known, I expect she wanted to see somebody else. For my own part, I should not be the least surprised if at this very moment, whilst you and I are talking here, she were carrying on with that German officer."

"German officer!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "What German officer?"

"How dull you are! Why, What's-his-name, to be sure!"

"Who's 'What's-his-name?'"

"Oh, you know, Von—Von—Von Kessler, the man who rode the steeplechase."

"Nonsense, Emma! It's all right!" rejoined Mr. Davidson, thinking how absurd it was to feel vexed by a trifle, when he had such real and substantial cause for gratification. "You make mountains out of molehills."

"I only hope events may prove your words to be correct, John. It's easy enough for you to *say* things are all right, but my belief is, they are very far from being so in reality. Hetty's a regular goose when left to herself, capable of any romantic folly. Her head is full of all kinds of sentimental absurdities. Why, she would have taken that Spriggs."

"Well, I suppose we were much the same at eighteen," he said, with an indulgent smile.

"Not a bit of it. When I was a girl I was as sensible as I am now."

"You must have been a phenomenon, my dear Emma. And yet you do not appear to have been much more fortunate in your first matrimonial choice than in your second."

"That was because I had no mother to look after me. She died when I was young, and left me to my own resources. But, as regards Hetty, the case is different. You and she have wilfully refused to listen to my advice, and if evil comes of it, you have only yourselves to blame."

"So far, I flatter myself, I have managed matters very successfully," he remarked good-humouredly.

"Oh, indeed!" she rejoined, with biting sarcasm. "I am glad to hear it. Your ideas of success and mine differ very considerably. But then you never had any ambition beyond mere vulgar money-making."

"Who do you think has been here this afternoon?" he asked, ignoring observations which did not even possess the charm of novelty.

"I don't know; and, what's more, I don't care. Some of your underbred Manchester folk, no doubt."

"Do you call Lord Charles Mountgard an underbred Manchester person, Mrs. Davidson?"

She pricked up her ears.

"Lord Charles Mountgard? No, of course not. And, pray, what did he come about?"

Mr. Davidson's moment of triumph had arrived.

"He came to propose for Hetty. There! Are you still of the opinion that I have mismanaged matters?"

She gave a great gasp. The news quite took away her breath.

"No!" she ejaculated incredulously. "Not really?"

"As really and truly as I stand here. He is madly in love with Hetty, and would take her if she had not a farthing."

"Well, I never! I thought the young man was sweet, but I had no notion he was so far gone as all that!"

"He's terribly far gone," said Mr. Davidson, smiling at the mere recollection of the suitor's ardour, "so much so that he could hardly wait until this evening to tell her of his love. You see, Emma," he concluded, looking benignantly at his wife, "my 'interference' has not turned out so badly after all, in spite of your doleful predictions."

For once she had no retort ready, and, being worsted, felt it wiser to go on a different tack.

"I wonder what Mrs. Brown will say, and Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Robinson!" she mused triumphantly, enumerating the names of a few of her humbler Manchester friends. "How jealous they will be, poor things, with their tribes of plain, dowdy, unmarried daughters! They'll be ready to cut the nose off Hetty's face with spite; but, as I always said, there's nothing like coming abroad and giving a girl a certain amount of freedom. She gets into a good set at once. The fact of the matter is, we are too conventional at home. English people are absurdly strait-laced in their own country."

Mr. Davidson wisely refrained from disturbing the peace by pointing out to his wife the dissimilarity between her present and her former sentiments. He maintained a discreet silence on the subject. Matrimony had taught him caution.

"Ha, ha! John," she continued excitedly, "just to think of you and me sitting down to the wedding-breakfast with the Duke and Duchess of Skyedale! By the way, do you know how one ought to address a duke? We must find out, for I'm not quite sure. In the olden days—the days when I lived in society—I had a marchioness—the Dowager Marchioness of Tweedlekin—on my visiting-list. I left cards once, I remember, and she left them back in return. I did not actually see her; still, of course, after that we knew each other; but even in my palmiest time I never

had the good luck to make the acquaintance of a duke. The wedding will have to be in Manchester, John. As the bride's parents, we must insist upon that, and then we can ask the Duke and Duchess to stay with us at Murchiston, and get quite friendly. I think I'll have a puce velvet corded with canary for the occasion. Puce and canary go charmingly together, and they will suit my complexion. The *fiancée's* mother is always a very important personage, and it would not do for me not to look my best. John, are you listening?"

"To every word, my dear. Each one is a model of common sense and good feeling."

"Then it shall be puce and canary—or do you prefer puce and a good honest orange?"

"I decidedly vote for the canary. Get the best gown that can be got. We have only one daughter, and I'm determined to do the thing in style, and spare no expense. As to the *trousseau*, spend what you like upon it. For once nobody—not even you—shall have it in his power to call me stingy."

As he spoke, his person appeared to expand. His massive face kindled, and its sunken eyes flashed fire from beneath their dark and shaggy eyebrows. In a single afternoon, ten years seemed taken from his age. Instead of a gouty invalid, he was suddenly converted into a hale and vigorous man, capable of resisting the inroads of time for a long while yet to come. His travelling-clock, which he had brought with him and placed on the top of the iron stove, rang out one, two, three, four, with sharp metallic strokes that vibrated through the room.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I had no idea it was so late. I must go and take my afternoon water. I wonder where the dickens Hetty is. If she should come in, Emma, whilst I am away, don't say anything about Lord Charles until my return."

The words were still lingering on his lips when the door was opened cautiously and stealthily, and he caught sight of his daughter.

She appeared disconcerted at finding her parents within, and made a movement as if to draw back, but Mr. Davidson frustrated it by calling out:

"Hulloa, Hetty, is that you? Come here, and tell me where you have been, you young monkey."

Retreat was impossible. She advanced slowly and with evident

reluctance. Her eyes were veiled by their full white lids. On either cheek rested a fringe of long soft lashes that curved gently upwards. She was in walking costume, if walking costume can be called a straw hat, a parasol, and a pair of wrinkled Suède gloves.

"Where have you been, child?" repeated Mr. Davidson, feeling convinced of her offering a satisfactory explanation.

"I've been out," she answered laconically, not vouchsafing any detail.

"So it appears. That is no answer to my question."

"There's nothing more to know."

"On the contrary, Hetty," he replied, incensed by a certain doggedness in her manner, "there's a great deal more to know. You told me this morning that you were going to lunch with Mrs. Northcote and Miss Dawkins. I have reason to believe that that statement was not true. Your mother called there about three o'clock, and was informed that you not only were not expected, but had never been near the place."

The girl changed colour. Mr. Davidson paused a moment, expecting her to speak; then finding that she preserved an obstinate silence, he went on in a sterner key, "Hetty, I can't bear to think you are deceiving me. Do not be afraid to tell the truth. Come, be frank, child. What does this mean?"

She trembled. It was pitiful to see how she trembled and to watch the frightened expression of her young face.

His keen eyes were fixed on hers. They extorted an answer, even though they checked confession.

"No—nothing," she faltered, tracing the pattern of the faded carpet with the point of her little toe.

"Pshaw! that's absurd. Look here, Hetty," and he laid his powerful hand on her shoulder, making her wince under his heavy touch. "You have told one story. Do not tell another. You are too young to be able to fib with a good grace."

A blush of shame suffused cheeks, ears, and brow. The reprimand was evidently severely felt, for at these words she burst into a storm of passionate tears which caused her round young bosom to heave convulsively.

"I—I wanted to go out by myself."

"What for?" he asked harshly, for he had a feeling that she was deceiving him.

"To—to—g—get some presents to t—take home. Oh, don't

be so angry. D—don't look at me like that." And she put up her hand before her eyes as if to shut out the sight of his grave, disapproving face. "You keep me so tight. I—I'm never allowed to do—o anything like other g—girls, so I had to make an excuse."

"There! she's giving you some of her sauce now," interposed Mrs. Davidson. "And serve you right! You've brought it upon yourself. I knew how it would be if we didn't look sharp after her."

Mr. Davidson sighed. He became more and more confirmed in the idea that his daughter was prevaricating.

"Hetty," he said in tones of sorrowful reproof, "your mother and I are old. We do not, perhaps, enter into all your thoughts and feelings as we might if we were twenty years younger. Every now and then this has occurred to me, and I have tried, but more especially of late, not to prevent you from enjoying yourself when you got the chance. I believed you to be a good, honest, sensible girl, and I trusted you, even against my wife's advice. It grieves me to the heart to find that you should stand in such fear of your parents as to have recourse to a palpable untruth in their presence."

He spoke calmly and seriously, and on that account his words possessed a thousandfold more force than if he had flown into a rage. Those slow and weighty accents penetrated to the innermost depths of Hetty's being. She hung her head and sobbed as if her heart would break. It was as if the concentrated emotion of hours found relief in swift-flowing tears. Mr. Davidson watched her curiously, but her grief was so genuine, and indeed appeared so excessive in comparison with the cause, that his anger soon died away. Besides, if she went on crying like this her looks would be spoilt for the evening, and her lover would hardly take it as a flattering omen if she approached him with red eyes.

"Come, come," he said soothingly. "You have done wrong, but you are sorry for it—I can see that—so do not let us allude to the subject again. And now, Hetty, listen, for I have some good news to tell you."

She looked up, her deep eyes all drowned in tears, and shook her head incredulously.

"You are very young," he went on, "but still you are old enough to understand the importance of what I am about to communicate. A gentleman called on me this afternoon——"

"A gentleman!" she interposed breathlessly.

"Yes, one who, it appears, is greatly attached to you. In fact, he wishes to make you his wife."

She started and turned deadly pale.

"Can't you even guess the name of your admirer?" he asked playfully.

Hetty stood dumb before him. Every vestige of colour had fled from her face.

"Surely you can form a pretty shrewd notion who he is?" he said, still in the same jocular accents.

She shook her head, and an expression of despair stole over her beautiful countenance.

"Well," he exclaimed impatiently, "we *are* modest and unconscious, to be sure! Since you seem determined to give me no help, I must speak out plainly and get to the point, in order that you may be prepared for what is about to take place to-night. The long and the short of the matter is, Hetty, our very good friend, Lord Charles Mountgard, has begged my permission to propose to a certain young lady, who, as she is so coy, shall remain nameless. Now do you understand?"

And he looked at the girl and nodded, quite unable to conceal his elation.

"To propose!" cried Hetty in a voice of sharp agony. "Oh, but he mustn't—he mustn't!"

"Pshaw! What nonsense! Who's to prevent him? He's desperately in love, and he will."

"Father, you must prevent it."

"Me! I can't, even if I would. Besides, why should I? Lord Charles has my best wishes for his success."

"If he is allowed to propose, he will have to take the consequences."

"Are you mad, Hetty? Do you mean that you intend to refuse him?" demanded Mr. Davidson, walking up and down the room with quick, agitated strides.

"Yes, I can't do anything else."

"What rubbish!" put in Mrs. Davidson, who had listened open-mouthed to the above conversation. "Lord Charles is much too good for you. You ought to jump at such an offer. I know I should if I were a girl."

"He has a title," urged Mr. Davidson, "six thousand a year, and is a nice young fellow into the bargain. What objection can you possibly have to him, Hetty?"

"He's ugly," she answered, with a pout, "and I don't like ugly men."

"Pooh! what romantic folly! Have you no more serious reason for refusing him than that?"

"Lord Charles has got the shoulders of a champagne-bottle and the neck of a stork."

"If you answer me in this frivolous way," said Mr. Davidson sternly, "you will make me downright angry. I never heard such ridiculous nonsense in my life. Are these your only objections to the match?"

"No," said the girl desperately, flinging up her head like a stag at bay. "I don't care for Lord Charles except in a friendly way, and nothing will ever make me do so."

"Hoity toity!" answered her father. "You'd soon get fond of him. Any girl would of such a pleasant, honest young fellow once she came to see a little more of him. Love's all very well, but it's a mistake to think it everything in the world. One finds that out as one grows older, and the more flaming the passion at starting the greater the reaction, as a rule."

"I cannot marry a man whom I do not love," said Hetty obstinately. "Oh, why are you in such a hurry to get rid of me? Leave me alone—leave me alone for a little while longer."

Her prolonged resistance to his wish aroused Mr. Davidson's wrath. This opposition was as unexpected as it was determined, and never for a moment had his mind dwelt upon such a state of affairs.

"By Heaven!" he cried fiercely, seizing hold of the girl by her delicate wrist. "This is all nonsense. A chit like you has no business to set up any opinions of her own. I have told Lord Charles Mountgard that you will marry him, and," uttering a powerful oath, "marry him you shall!"

His angry eyes sought hers. She could feel his hot breath stirring the little curls upon her forehead. A great and nameless dread descended upon her soul, but she was his own child, and had inherited the paternal stubbornness of will.

Something in the look of her face frightened him. He felt that force was useless, and once more tried appeal.

"Hetty," he went on, altering his angry tone to a pleading and pathetic one, "I do not want to treat you harshly or unkindly. I desire nothing but your welfare. But you are a mere child in

point of years, and have no experience of the world. You look at things as they seem, not as they actually are. It is natural to your age to form ideals ; but I, who have lived and suffered, know that ideals are only another name for heartache and delusion. What does a girl do ? She sets up some imaginary hero on a pedestal, insists on marrying him against the advice of her parents and friends, then makes a great howl when she discovers that the hero is no hero after all, but only a very common piece of clay, full of animal instincts and brutalities implanted within him by nature. Then the fond couple fall out. She accuses him of deceiving her ; he responds that she is a fool, and he never set up for being better than he was. It is a bitter experience for any woman to pass through. I would save you from it if I could by marrying you to a gentleman occupying a high and honourable position. As the wife of Lord Charles Mountgard, there is every prospect of your being able to lead not only a happy, but a useful, life. Therefore, child, do not refuse him lightly. For my sake, for your mother's sake, and for your own sake, think the matter well over. If you insist upon it your answer can be postponed for a few days, but when Lord Charles speaks to you to-night, as he is sure to do, at least give him some hope."

Mr. Davidson's face had grown strangely soft and serious during this speech. Hetty realized that he desired nothing but her good, and the knowledge brought exquisite pain. Ah ! why had he not shown his love more frequently ? Why had he so often repelled her, when with the least encouragement she would gladly have taken him into her confidence ?

Again the tears welled up into her eyes, which looked preternaturally large when contrasted with the marble whiteness of her face. It wore a scared expression. The lips were parted, the delicately pencilled brows upraised.

"Hetty, dear," urged Mr. Davidson, encouraged by her silence to believe that he had made a sensible impression, "I have not many years to live. Will you not render me happy before I die ? You have it in your power to do so."

His pleading voice and new caressing manner affected her with painful intensity. He loved her, and in all her dumb, passionate yearning for love, she had never known it until to-day. A shudder passed through her frame. She writhed like a creature tortured beyond endurance. Once, twice, she tried to speak, wildly loosen-

ing the collar at her throat. Then, in faltering accents that were almost inaudible, she said:

"Father, I cannot do as you wish."

"You cannot!" he echoed, his anger once more flaming out at this unexpected reply. "Say rather that you won't!"

"No, no." And she laughed hysterically. "Lord Charles's proposal comes too late. He should have been a day earlier."

"A day earlier? What do you mean? I insist upon knowing, and will be trifled with by you no longer."

For a moment absolute silence reigned in the room. A pin might have been heard dropping to the floor.

At last—it seemed an eternity—in a dull, despairing voice, Hetty said:

"Father, mother. I cannot marry Lord Charles, because—I—I am—married already. . . ."

"What!" ejaculated both parents simultaneously. "Married! You—married! How? When? Where?"

The worst was past now; at least, so Hetty hoped and believed. They would be very, very angry, and she must bear their anger meekly because she deserved it, and then, when the storm had blown over, they would forgive her. That was what Karl had said, but in the meantime things were very terrible to contend against, and her moral fortitude was giving way.

"Herr Von Kessler and I were married this morning at Frankfurt," she said, trembling from top to toe.

Mr. Davidson seemed suddenly turned into a figure of stone. Except for his hard and difficult breathing, he might have been bereft of life. The shock had petrified him. Mrs. Davidson, whose feelings were more superficial than her husband's, was the first to recover speech. Wife-like, in a moment of disappointment and humiliation, she upbraided the unfortunate man, who was already overwhelmed by the complete defeat of his plans.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, turning fiercely upon him. "I knew how it would be. I said so all along. This is your doing, John, and just comes of thrusting your wife into the background, and letting a girl of eighteen do exactly as she pleases. Wretched, wretched child!" she went on, addressing Hetty, whilst two tears of mortification rolled down her fat cheeks. "What have you done? Married, indeed, and to that pauper Von Kessler! Oh, dear! oh, dear! I shan't have the chance of entertaining the

Duke and Duchess after all, nor of wearing my puce and canary gown, nor——”

“Silence, woman, with your little selfish babble,” called out Mr. Davidson, in a voice hoarse from concentrated passion. “What’s done can’t be undone, as Hetty will find to her cost. She has chosen to marry a stranger, a nobody, a penniless German officer, and she must bear the consequences of her rash, deceitful act. Henceforth I cast her off. She is no longer any daughter of mine, and not for a single night more shall she sleep under the same roof as myself. I wish to forget her—to blot her from my memory as if she had never existed. No,” as Hetty tried to protest, “don’t interrupt. It is the last time you will ever hear me speak, and I am determined to have my say.”

“Father,” she pleaded faintly, “oh! father, do have mercy.”

He gave a short and bitter laugh.

“Mercy! Not I. You have thwarted the dearest wish of my life at the moment of its realization, and are bringing down my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. From this day forward I refuse of my own free will ever to set eyes on your face again. Now, Frau Von Kessler, you know what you have to expect, and may go to your husband. I question very much if he will give you a hearty welcome when he finds that you come to him empty-handed.”

“It is false!” cried the girl passionately. “Karl loves me. He loves me for my own sake. He may be poor, but he is not mercenary.”

“And have I not loved you also? Oh! Hetty!” and Mr. Davidson’s deep voice broke. “You little knew how proud I was of you, or what great things I intended to do for you.”

“I did not want great things. I wanted kindness, somebody young to talk to, and to sympathize with me. Since I left school, my life has been one of isolation and repression. I could not stand it. It drove me mad.”

“Well,” he said coldly, ashamed of his passing weakness, “you have got your wish, and having flown from the parent nest, need not seek to return to it when you find the world wide and dreary. Go.” And with the knotty forefinger of his right hand he pointed towards the door. There was a resistless and relentless force about the concluding word which seemed to paralyze her will and to defy remonstrance. She felt his stern eyes fixed

upon her—she dared not meet them—and they compelled her like an electric current to move in the direction indicated. Pale, trembling, dazed, with nothing to sustain her save the great love in her heart, mechanically she opened the door. To leave like this seemed impossible.

"Go!" thundered the same sonorous voice. "Do you not hear what I say? Make haste."

She made one timid gesture of appeal; then fled out into the street—anywhere to escape from that severe and sorrowful face which she knew would haunt her until the end of her days. When Karl Von Kessler had forced that fatal promise from her under the pine trees, she had known matters would go hardly, but she had never imagined they would go as hardly as this.

Only her blind adoration of him and the personal ascendancy he exercised could have led her into a hasty and secret marriage, which from the first was condemned by conscience. Conscience had succumbed to love, and lo! the result.

"Let me just make sure of you, Hetty. Let me just make sure of you. Sooner or later the old people are bound to get over their anger." These were the specious words by which Karl had vanquished her resistance, supplementing them by an embrace.

How wrong she had been to yield! What an injury she had done him! Knowing her parents as she did, she ought to have warned him that in their case such reasoning was certain to prove false.

"I shall never forgive you," sobbed Mrs. Davidson to her husband when Hetty had gone, "*never*, NEVER, NEVER. It's all your doing from beginning to end. And now, just to think that, instead of having a real, live lord for my son-in-law, I have got nothing but a great, beefy, beer-drinking foreigner, whom I hate! Hetty has behaved atrociously. She'll never do either of us any credit, but if I live to be a hundred, I shall always maintain that you brought this misfortune upon yourself, John, yes—brought it upon yourself, through refusing to listen to me, or to ta——"

She stopped abruptly, even her obtuse sensibilities alive to the ghastly change that had come over her husband's face. It turned from yellow to red, from red to a livid purple. The veins on his forehead were swollen as if about to burst, his eyes looked into vacancy with a fixed unnatural stare, and a frothy foam oozed from his parted lips.

"John!" she cried, thoroughly alarmed. "What's the matter? Are you ill?"

There was a gurgling sound as of some one choking. His tall form tottered and swayed. Before she could rush to his assistance he fell face downwards with a dull thud on to the floor. He lay there quite still, the black coat, which he had put on in honour of Lord Charles, torn at the shoulder seam by the suddenness of his fall.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A MISERABLE WEDDING-DAY.

WHEN Hetty reached the street she felt numbed and bewildered. At first she could not think. It was as if a great sledge-hammer had descended with deadening force upon her brain, crushing every faculty, and reducing power, action, volition, into a state of chaos.

Unconsciously she walked in the direction of the Park. Habit, and habit alone, guided her footsteps thither, for she saw nothing, heard nothing, as she went along. Eyes and ears refused to accomplish their accustomed task. External objects—nay, life itself—appeared vague and unreal. The various emotions through which she had passed during the course of the day had exhausted her both mentally and physically. She was tired in body and in spirit.

Scarce knowing what she did, she wandered along the Ferdinand Strasse and into the cool, shadowy park, sinking down on to a bench near the rose garden, which was close to the principal promenade.

The warm air was scented with the delicious fragrance of the flowers. Their delicate outside leaves were curled and burnt by the heat, which in extracting their life-breath doomed them to premature death. The late afternoon sun glinted slantingly down into the trellised mass of foliage overhead, touching with vivid gold the dark rough trunks of the trees. Its rays fell full on Hetty's drooping figure, on her white, set face, and little gloved hands clasped tightly together. By degrees their brightness cheered and comforted the girl, and wooed her back from apathy to renewed sensibility. She did not know how long she had been seated there. In seasons of great shock to the nervous system, as in grave illness, one loses count of the time.

From the lengthening shadows, the perceptible cooling of the air, and the sweet confusion of bird-voices twittering forth their evening hymns in clear, plaintive notes, she gradually awoke to a consciousness that it was getting late. She shuddered and looked at her watch. Both hands stood at six o'clock. Somehow the familiar action brought back a flood of poignant memories, and of fears for the future. What would become of her—an outcast from hearth and home? Where was she going to lay her head that night? The actual misery of her situation began to make itself felt. She took out her purse, opened it, and counted the contents. Alas! it contained but three marks. She had had to spend money on the journey to Frankfort, and Karl, poor dear fellow, had been forced to borrow from her in order to settle the marriage fees. Three marks! only three marks. What a pitiful sum it seemed when it represented one's entire capital! They might purchase a dinner at one of the less fashionable hotels, but they were not sufficient to pay for a bed into the bargain. Besides, every place was full. She had heard it said that for the last week or ten days visitors had been turned away by the score. And people stared at her so, it made her feel quite timid. Even in the streets of Frankfort, men had turned and looked after her as she hurried along to the little quiet church where she was to meet Karl. Then an inspiration came to her aid. She would go to him. He was her husband, and the proper person to whom to apply in an emergency like the present. He would shelter her under his own roof, and make her forget the painful experiences so recently gone through. If he only welcomed her with a smile she should rest content.

Thus thinking, she rose to her feet and walked a few paces. But the next moment, with a sigh of despair, she tottered back again to the bench, for she suddenly remembered that, strange, even ludicrous, as it might appear, she was married to a man whose private address she actually did not know.

She and Karl had been in the habit of meeting so frequently out of doors, watching the lawn-tennis or pacing up and down the Terrace, that he had never once told her in what part of the town his lodgings were situated.

A pang stabbed her to the heart, for, in this time of sore need, her one instinct was to go to him for whose sake she had braved so much, and derive comfort and consolation from his love. If

only Karl were kind to her, and fond of her, terrible as it was to be cast off by one's parents, she should never for an instant regret having become his wife.

She seemed to realize that henceforth they two must be all the world to each other, and, for her own part, she was prepared to give up everything, people, country, home, for him.

A shadow darkened the yellow gravel at her feet. She looked up hastily, and, with a start of joy, perceived the object of her thoughts rapidly advancing towards the bench. A sudden timidity seized her. She felt herself turn hot, then cold.

"Hetty!" he exclaimed in surprise. "What brings you here? I was walking alone, and when I saw you in the distance, I could hardly believe my eyes. Why are you all alone?"

"Oh! Karl," she cried, with a quick sob of relief. "I'm so glad you've come. I can't tell you how glad I am."

"Thank you, little one; you are very complimentary. I am equally delighted to see you, even although the pleasure is unexpected. But," looking anxiously into her troubled face, "is anything the matter?"

"I am turned out, Karl," she said, in a cold, despairing voice. "They won't let me stay at the hotel any longer."

"They! Who?"

"My father and mother. I have nothing but the clothes on my back, and," beginning to cry, "I—I don't know where on earth to go, or what to do with myself."

"*Himmel!* The bombshell has burst, then. How did it happen?"

"I was obliged to tell them of our marriage, Karl; I couldn't help it. Lord Charles Mountgard went to the hotel this afternoon, and asked papa's permission to propose."

"And your father gave it?"

"Yes, of course. He was delighted. I refused to accept Lord Charles, and papa said I must. When I raised objections he grew very angry, and insisted on my giving him a reason."

"*Ach!* that was awkward."

"Awkward! I tell you, Karl, it was horrible, quite horrible. I shall never forget the scene that took place between us. At last, when driven to extremity, I confessed that I was already married to you."

"And what did the old gentleman say?" he inquired eagerly.

"Papa was furious. He ordered me out of the room—out of the house," and Hetty's voice trembled at the recollection. "He vowed he would never look upon my face again, and disowned me as his daughter. I wonder how I lived through it. I don't think I could have done so had not it been for you. Oh, Karl!" she said hurriedly. "What is wrong? You are not angry with me, are you?" For at her words his blond countenance became disfigured by a frown so dark as to fill her with apprehension. "What have I done?"

"Done! You've made a regular mess of things, and mis-managed them all round."

"Oh, Karl!" His blame went quivering into her sensitive heart like a sharp barb.

"You should have waited for a favourable moment, instead of blurting out the truth at a time when any fool might have known it was not likely to be well received."

"But I couldn't," she rejoined piteously, feeling crushed by his displeasure. "Papa had invited Lord Charles to dinner to-night, on purpose that he should propose to me. How could I have accepted him when I was already your wife?"

"*Peste!* You should have temporized. A clever girl would have pretended to agree to anything rather than put the old man's back up."

"But then I am not clever," she said sadly. "I told you that, Karl, from the first."

"Did your father make any mention of—of money?" he asked, reddening slightly as he put the question.

"No, not a word. He was too angry. He simply turned me out, and said he didn't care what became of me, and oh, Karl," she went on, looking at her husband with glistening eyes, "I am so hungry. I have had nothing to eat since breakfast, for, if you remember, we had not time to get any luncheon at Frankfort."

He flushed uneasily. He had taken care to indulge in a substantial meal before presenting himself at the church. Love had not spoilt his appetite, or taken the sharp edge off it, and Hetty's pitiful confession rang in his ears like a reproach. But what was to be done? On seventy-five pounds a year he could not possibly provide the necessities of life for two. He was sorry for Hetty, but she had certainly displayed a lamentable want of tact. In his heart he blamed her bitterly for what had taken place.

"You must go back to your parents at once, and make friends with them," he said decidedly.

She looked at him. Was this all the sympathy he had to offer? Her love received a sudden check, which infinitely exceeded any previous suffering.

"I can't," she said in a strangely quiet voice, turning white to the very lips.

"Pooh! that's nonsense; you must. What are we to do?"

"I don't know; but I can't go back. They wouldn't take me in if I did. You don't know them. My father is like a block of granite. Once he says a thing, no earthly power can move him. Karl, Karl," she went on, with sudden self-reproach, "you do well to blame me, for I knew his nature, you didn't; and it was madness my allowing myself to be persuaded into marrying you in this underhand sort of way."

"Bah! he will come round; he must. The old beggar has no other children, no one else to whom to leave his money. But it may take a few days. Meanwhile what is to become of poor little you?"

The blood rushed to Hetty's cheeks.

"Karl," she said timidly, "could not—could not you take me? After all there would be no harm. I am your wife."

"Yes," he responded, with a sarcastic curl of the lip. "I am not likely to forget that fact. But what you propose is out of the question. Mine are only bachelor lodgings, and contain no accommodation for a lady."

"Oh!" she cried in sudden dread, thinking that he meant to stalk away and leave her to sit on the bare wooden bench all night. "I am not at all particular. I can lie on a sofa, anywhere. Do—do let me come."

"Hetty," he said sternly, "this is folly. You must be reasonable, and allow yourself to be guided by my advice, else we shall never get on at all. Don't you see how foolish it would be to increase your father's anger by making people talk?"

His tone jarred upon her; it added to the terrible feeling that he was failing her in her need.

"What am I to do, then?" she asked in despair.

He shrugged his great broad shoulders.

"Have you no friends who would take you in for a night or two?"

"There's Milly," she said doubtfully.

"*Ach*, of course. Why did we not think of her before? That solves the difficulty. Come, make haste; there is no time to lose, if you would catch your friend before she goes out to dinner."

"Karl, you'll accompany me to the house, won't you, if only to explain? It's so awkward."

"Unfortunately I can't. I was just going to dine with some American friends when I saw you. I am shockingly late as it is, and must walk with big strides." Then, taking compassion on the white, quivering face upraised to him, he patted her on the shoulder, after first looking round in order to ascertain that no one was likely to perceive the action, and added, "Come, Hettchen, cheer up. Don't look so downcast, there's a good little woman. Things are sure to come right in the end. They are only just a little bit crooked for a day or two. To-morrow our prospects will seem brighter."

These few kind words—the first he had uttered—touched her to the quick, and drove away the hard, miserable thoughts that had gradually been gathering in her mind. She caught his hand, and raising it to her lips, kissed it with passionate gratitude. Ah! how slight a thing her love was, if it could take the alarm so easily.

"Karl, *my* Karl," she cried, "whatever happens, never think I regret having married you. You are far too dear, and my whole heart is yours. It is only when you seem displeased with me that my courage fails. Supported by you, I am ready to face the whole world." And her pale cheeks took on a tinge of colour.

He was moved in spite of himself, and drew her hand within his arm. An exquisite sense of repose and protection stole over her spirit. She could feel his heart beating with great strong throbs as she walked by his side. The oblique rays of the setting sun rested on her straight young virginal form, casting a long shadow on the green grass, as the skirts of her light dress brushed past it.

"You are a good little girl, Hetty," he said, "a very good little girl indeed. It is not your fault that we can't live without something to pay the butcher's bill."

"Oh!" she said, with a shiver. "Do not let money come between us. I don't the least mind being poor, if you are satisfied."

He gave a hard laugh, which effectually put a stop to any more such affectionate but foolish sentiments.

"But I'm not—that's just the mischief of it. I have suffered too much from poverty all my life not to be thoroughly disgusted with the privations it brings in its train. Love in a cottage is an exploded idea. Only fools believe in it now-a-days."

Instinctively she shrank away from him. A horrible fear made her heart feel like a lump of lead. What would happen supposing her father refused to give her any money? Would Karl cease to care for her?

"I should not mind privations for myself," she said sadly, "at least if they were shared with you."

"You talk like a silly little goose," he rejoined. "And now I must positively be off. Our roads lie in a different direction. To-morrow I will come to see you at Mrs. Northcote's, and then we can settle what steps to take."

"Good-bye, Karl," she said wistfully, putting up her face with unconscious invitation.

It was such a lovely, loving face, so tender, and yet so sad, that for a moment he felt a strong desire to stoop down and kiss it. Perhaps he might have done so had he not perceived an English earl and countess of his acquaintance walking slowly up the Promenade. He took her hand instead, pressed it as he might have pressed the hand of any pretty girl he happened to fancy at the time, and strode off to his dinner as fast as his long legs could carry him.

In this manner husband and wife separated on their wedding-day. So far it had not been a very happy one for the poor little bride. After parting with Karl, an unconquerable despondency took possession of her being.

She felt that he was both disappointed and dissatisfied, and this knowledge was like the last straw that breaks the camel's back. Her love rendered her absurdly sensitive. She tried to explain the depression produced by Karl's conduct in this way; but make what excuses she liked for him, a deadly sense of failure remained behind.

She watched him disappear, a host of tumultuous emotions tearing at her heart-strings, and then wearily and slowly wended her footsteps towards the Obere Promenade. How cold it had turned all of a sudden! The sun had sunk to rest behind the great tall trees, and dark shadows enveloped her on every side. A tiny yellow beech leaf fell to the ground, shrivelled and twisted

into the shape of a miniature horn. It was the first dead leaf she had seen that year—the first sign of the glorious summer coming to an end. In her morbid and sur-excited state, this small decayed object appeared as an evil omen. Would her love and Karl's fade in a similar manner? Oh! no, no, it was too dreadful to think of. She experienced no fear for herself, but deep in her innermost consciousness, like a noxious reptile to be grappled with at all hazards, so as to prevent its cruel sting from striking, lurked an agonizing fear of him. Was he strong? was he true? was he loyal? She thrust these questions into the background, and refused to answer them. On her wedding-day surely they had no business to present themselves. That they did so argued some fault in her, some horrible flaw in her love. She was the traitor, not Karl, with his fair, open face and attractive blue eyes.

Mrs. Northcote and Amelia were dressed to go out to dinner with some friends, and were on the point of starting, when, to their great surprise, Hetty was ushered into the sitting-room.

"Why, Hetty, what on earth brings you here at this hour of the evening?" began Amelia inquisitively, but she stopped short at sight of her friend's face, which betrayed some serious calamity.

"I come as a beggar," said Hetty, with a wan smile.

"A beggar! Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"I almost think so," answered the girl wearily, and then, in a dull, mechanical voice, she proceeded to narrate the same pitiful story that she had only a short time ago told Karl. It did not lose any of its pathos in the telling, and her tears flowed freely.

"Oh, Hetty, Hetty!" exclaimed the warm-hearted Amelia, throwing her arms round her friend's neck and kissing her again and again. "What have you done? You poor dear—you poor dear! I shall never forgive myself for having introduced you to that wretch Von Kessler. He has taken a cowardly advantage of your youth and your innocence."

Hetty freed herself with a kind of quiet dignity.

"You must not talk like that," she said. "Karl is my husband. I can hear nothing against him."

"Poor little lamb!" ejaculated Amelia, with a sudden blush. "And I have been such a brute, Hetty. I have actually been jealous of you and fancied that you were in love with North Penywern."

"How could you make such a mistake, Milly, you who are usually so sharp? Was that why you seemed less friendly lately?"

"Yes," said the other, hanging her head. "I can't tell you how deadly ashamed I feel of myself."

"It was never any one but Karl," rejoined Hetty. "I loved him from the first moment I saw him that night on the Terrace."

"And you are married, my poor child, actually married!" said Mrs. Northcote, pityingly. "How could you do it?"

Hetty glanced somewhat defiantly at the speaker, but there was such a look of kindly sympathy and concern on the elder lady's face that she felt encouraged to confide in her.

"I hardly know. Looking back, I wonder at my audacity. It was that day of the garden-party," she went on, turning to Amelia. "I did not like the games, and Karl asked me to go for a walk in the Tannen Wald instead of looking on at them. Then he told me that he loved me very dearly, but he felt sure my parents would never give their consent to our engagement on account of his poverty. Upon this he begged me to marry him secretly, declaring things would soon come right once we had taken the decisive step. I refused at first, but Karl got angry, and vowed I did not love him as he loved me. That made me mad. And then, Amelia—I really don't quite know how it happened—he took me in his arms and kissed me, and all of a sudden I seemed so happy—so happy and yet so weak—I could no longer say no, and from that moment it was as if I belonged to him altogether."

She covered her face with her hands as she finished speaking. The recollection was sacred.

"The thundering blackguard!" muttered Amelia, not pausing to choose her language. "He deserves to be hanged."

"Milly," interposed Mrs. Northcote, "Hetty is tired. I shall stop at home, give her something to eat, and put her to bed. You must go now and dine with the Mercers. Make what excuse you like for me, only don't mention this unfortunate occurrence."

"No, of course not, aunt," said Amelia. Then, with a ray of hope illumining her countenance, "The marriage may not prove legal."

"Von Kessler will have taken care to make it binding, depend upon that," said Mrs. Northcote. "I sadly fear that as the poor, foolish child has sown, so will she have to reap."

When Milly had reluctantly departed, Mrs. Northcote was very tender with Hetty. After first making her eat and drink, she put the weary girl to bed. As the little old lady tucked in the white

sheets and smoothed the counterpane, Hetty suddenly seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

"How good you are to me," she cried. "I can never thank you for your kindness. Ah! if only I had had a mother like you, I should have been satisfied with her love and never done anything without her knowledge. But my mother is so different."

Mrs. Northcote's eyes glistened. "My dear," she said, "I can understand it all. It was the need, the longing for love in your heart that drove you to commit matrimony. Poor child! poor child! Please God, it may turn out well. Love is a beautiful and a holy thing, but alas! with we weak women it often fails us cruelly. I trust it may never do so in your case, for you have staked your all." So saying, she stole softly from the room, seeking to conceal her emotion.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A FRIENDLY AMBASSADDRESS.

EARLY the next morning Karl called, according to promise, at the Obere Promenade, hoping to see his wife. He found Mrs. Northcote and Amelia occupying the sitting-room. Both ladies accorded him a very cool greeting. Nature had not rendered him over and above sensitive; yet he could not help feeling that their reception was far from cordial, and the fact of their daring to judge his actions unfavourably aroused a smouldering resentment and sense of hostility. Karl liked to stand well with the world, to be admired rather than condemned, and the frigid demeanour of aunt and niece incensed him before a word had been exchanged on either side.

Hetty, it appeared, had had a bad night, only dozing off towards morning, and was not yet up.

When Herr Von Kessler was announced an awkward silence took place. Mrs. Northcote, summoning all her courage to her aid, was the first to break it. Her heart was full of anger against this strong and selfish man who had consulted only his own interests, and who had placed in a false position the very girl he professed to love. Such love as this possessed no beauty in her eyes. She looked upon the marriage as a dastardly act on the part of the handsome Karl. She was not one given to holding harsh opinions as a rule, but in the present instance she felt very strongly.

"Herr Von Kessler," she said, pretending not to see his outstretched hand, and contenting herself with a formal bow, "you must forgive me for speaking plainly, but I can no longer bid you welcome to my house. In entrapping a mere child like Hetty into a secret marriage, you have done both a wrong and a dishonourable thing. You see already to what a pass you have brought her. It is neither fair nor right for a man to take away a heedless, ignorant girl from a comfortable home unless he have a decent one to offer her in exchange."

His face grew dark at her words.

"Permit me to say, Mrs. Northcote," he answered haughtily, "that Hetty and I are the best judges of our own actions. We require neither comments nor criticisms."

"Perhaps not," she answered, with unusual spirit, "but all the same you will find it hard to escape from them."

"Indeed, you will," interposed Amelia hotly, "and especially if you don't take proper care of the poor girl you were in such a desperate hurry to make your wife. Fancy being inhuman enough to leave her sitting out in the Park whilst you went to your dinner! But there! it was just like you." And she gazed at him with crushing contempt.

"Miss Dawkins," he said, turning red, "I thought we were friends. It appears I have made a mistake."

"Friends! Yes, so we were, but we are not friends any longer. I shall never forgive you for the harm you have done to Hetty—no, never."

"Be quiet, Amelia," said her aunt authoritatively, for, mild as the little lady seemed, she knew how to make herself obeyed on occasions. "I quite sympathize with your feelings, but you allow them to get the better of your discretion. Unfortunately what's done can't be undone, and, to do Herr Von Kessler justice, I believe he is quite aware of our opinions without being told them."

"You take care that I should know them," he said, gnawing irritably at the ends of his flaxen moustache.

"Let us cease this profitless discussion," said Mrs. Northcote. "May I ask what steps you propose taking for your wife's protection and comfort? Matrimony has its responsibilities, remember."

"I do not propose taking any steps at present. It is too soon."

"Too soon!" she exclaimed, with an irrepressible arch of her eyebrows. "In that case I must remind you we leave Homburg

on this day week. Hetty is, of course, welcome to remain here until then, but, owing to circumstances, we are unable to alter our plans. It is better that this should be distinctly understood."

"Oh," said Karl confidently, "it does not signify. The time certainly is short, but the old people—Hetty's parents, I mean—are sure to come round by then. After all, why should they object to our marriage? I am noble, and have nothing against me but my poverty. They can't really mean to wash their hands of their only daughter."

Mrs. Northcote still looked unconvinced. She was by no means so sanguine as he.

"I hope for Hetty's sake," she said, "that your predictions may prove correct. At the same time, Herr Von Kessler, I consider it my duty to warn you not to count too confidently on any help from Mr. Davidson. He is one of those men of iron who will break rather than bend—that is, if I read his character aright."

"*Donner und Blitzen!* What am I to do, then?"

"If you act on my advice, you will lose no time in looking out for some respectable place to which to take your wife."

"But we shall starve. It is quite impossible, even with the utmost economy, for two of us to live on seventy-five pounds a year. The rent alone would swallow up the greater portion of our income."

"You should have taken these things into your consideration before persuading a young and foolish girl to commit the important step of matrimony without her parents' knowledge or consent," she said severely, for the more Mrs. Northcote thought the matter over, the more rascally did Karl's conduct appear.

"You talk like one who has never been in love," he responded impatiently, almost rudely.

"Pardon me," she retorted. "I talk like one who knows how to distinguish real love from false, and who declines to bow down and worship a vulgar, mercenary passion whose god is Self, and Self only."

Karl flushed crimson and made no reply. To be lectured by an old woman was intolerable, and yet somehow at that moment his usual confidence deserted him, and he felt afraid of what her tongue might say next.

He took up his cap, which he had laid on the table, and drew himself up stiffly but awkwardly.

"If you refuse to allow me to see Hetty, absurd as such a refusal is under the circumstances, I think I may as well take my leave, particularly as I am due at the office at ten o'clock."

"If you like to call again later on, Herr Von Kessler, no doubt your wife will be visible. You forget that she has gone through a great deal, and that her nervous system has received a shock from which it will require time to recover."

"I have the honour to wish you a good-morning," said Karl solemnly, going out on to the balcony as he spoke, and descending by a flight of stone steps into the garden, which led to the road. Without another word he stalked away.

"Brute!" ejaculated Amelia, almost before he was out of ear-shot. "It made me mad to hear him talk. Upon my word, aunt, I never realized till to-day that he was such a big beast. He doesn't care a bit for Hetty. I'm positive of that."

"Milly, my dear, you really should not make use of such strong language."

"I can't help it, aunt. I don't think I ever felt so indignant about anything in my life. It's quite evident, the wretch has married Hetty only for her money, and now that he finds she very likely may not have any, he is beginning to repent of his bargain already. Oh, how I wish I were a man, and could give him the thrashing he deserves."

And Amelia doubled up her white fists in a most pugilistic manner.

Mrs. Northcote sighed. The recent interview had given her a faint colour, but the expression of her face was very grave.

"I am afraid it is a bad business for poor Hetty," she said. "Herr Von Kessler has a great, fine body, but he appears lamentably deficient in brains. He could not offer a single suggestion when I asked him how he intended providing for his wife, and still clings to the belief that Mr. Davidson will make his daughter a handsome allowance."

"He was right in one thing," remarked Amelia. "It is a self-evident proposition that even in Germany, where living is comparatively cheap, two people cannot subsist on seventy-five pounds a year. Why, most of it would go in supplying the voracious Karl with dinners. He has a giant's appetite, and that poor, foolish little Hetty actually admired it. Well, I'll be bound she'll tell a different tale very soon."

"What madness it was, their getting married!" said Mrs. Northcote. To speak the truth, Karl had estranged her sympathies. If he had been what she called "a *nice* young man," she would have been disposed to view his shortcomings much more leniently. But her woman's instinct had detected a certain want of reality about his love, accompanied by a profound egotism.

"If it weren't for poor dear little Hetty," continued Amelia, "nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to see that cowardly fortune-hunter caught in his own trap. He doesn't deserve to get a farthing of Mr. Davidson's money."

"I echo the sentiment," said Mrs. Northcote, "but as matters stand it is impossible to punish him without punishing her. That's the worst of it. We must help the poor thing if we can, for, in spite of such a mountain of flesh in the shape of a husband, you mark my words, the brunt of the battle will fall on her shoulders. The difficulty is to know how best to interfere on her behalf."

"Aunt," said Amelia, her face brightening, "I have an idea."

"Have you, my dear?" answered Mrs. Northcote, with playful sarcasm. "They are always welcome."

"How would it be for me to go to the hotel and see Mr. Davidson about Hetty?"

"Such a step would require a great deal of courage, more than I possess," said the elder lady.

"I think I could do it, aunt. I am not afraid of him, as so many people seem to be. At least, I have not been afraid up till now. Of course, I can't tell how I shall feel when I get to the hotel. But it's worth trying, especially as Hetty always says I am a favourite of the old gentleman's. She declares that if she went herself she would not have a chance even of seeing him. She said so this morning whilst I was dressing, and then it came into my head that perhaps I might succeed where she failed. It's only a forlorn hope, but still it may lead to something."

"It may," said Mrs. Northcote doubtfully, "though somehow I do not feel very sanguine, and you must not be disappointed, Milly dear, if the interview ends in no results. From what I know of the Davidsons, they are likely to prove a very tough old couple to deal with. To me they are deficient in that sympathetic insight and power of imagination which alone renders the society of one's fellow-creatures agreeable."

"I detest her," said Amelia decidedly. "She's so odiously vulgar and affected, but, with all his faults, I don't altogether dislike him."

"He has got a heart," observed Mrs. Northcote, "which she has not. The only question is, Will his wounded pride allow him to show it? Unless I misjudge him, he is rather more obstinate and stiff-necked than he is affectionate."

"I can but try," reiterated Amelia, though not very hopefully, for her own opinion was precisely the same as her aunt's, and she was quite aware that she had undertaken an exceedingly difficult task.

The project, when communicated to Hetty, received her warmest approbation.

"You are the very person, Milly dear," she said. "If any one can soften papa and make him go back from his word, I verily believe it is you. He likes you so much, and, what's more, has an immense respect for your opinion. And you have this in your favour—you are not frightened of him, as I am. I would not dare to make another appeal to save my life."

Hetty was still tearful and nervous, so Milly started on her errand without confiding the very grave fears of success which she herself entertained in her secret heart. The seriousness of her friend's situation was not to be denied. On arriving at the Hotel de l'Europe, she was informed that Mr. Davidson was ill and refused to admit visitors. Being prepared for some such reception, she extracted a card from her leather case and hastily scribbled on it, "May I see you for a few minutes on important business connected with H——?" After waiting some little time the answer came back in the affirmative. Preceded by the hall porter, she went upstairs, and was shown into Mr. and Mrs. Davidson's sitting-room.

The old gentleman was lying full-length on a sofa, his head supported by cushions, and a thick travelling rug thrown over his legs. He seemed to breathe heavily and with considerable difficulty, and every now and then a nervous twitch agitated the muscles round his mouth. Mrs. Davidson sat by the open window and made pretence to knit, but the work did not go on very fast, and in reality she was idly watching the passers-by, with an abstracted expression of countenance which denoted a certain amount of unease, not accompanied, however, by actual pain.

Amelia, advancing, took all this in at a glance, then she stopped short, appalled by the change that had taken place in Mr. Davidson's appearance. His face was shrunk, its complexion ashen,

and the usually bright eyes were dull and glazed. Somehow they reminded her of the sun when, shorn of its glory, it shines faintly out from behind a passing cloud.

"Oh, Mr. Davidson!" she exclaimed impulsively, without pausing to consider what effect her words were likely to produce. "How ill you look."

He passed his hand wearily over his brow, as if seeking to assist a memory once clear, now uncomfortably defective.

"My head feels bad," he said, smiling faintly. "Since yesterday it is as if it were stuffed with cotton wool. I can't remember—can't remember things. The doctor declares I am suffering from some kind of mild apoplectic seizure." And he made another failure of a smile.

"He has no business to be out of bed, Miss Dawkins," explained Mrs. Davidson tartly and unsympathetically. "It's downright madness his attempting to see visitors, and he promised me he wouldn't. But there, when he got your card he insisted on your being shown up. Pray don't think me rude if I ask you not to stay very long."

"I will go at once and come again another day," said Amelia, moving towards the door.

"No, no; don't do anything of the sort," the invalid called out. "Come and sit down by me. I want to speak to you."

Amelia did as she was bidden, rightly judging that it would only upset him not to yield to his wishes. He looked at her, and there was a dumb yearning in his eyes which she understood, and which brought a lump to her throat that she could not gulp down without considerable effort. If his faults were grave, he suffered keenly, and she respected and sympathized with the old man's sorrow. It is hard even for the strong to be strong always. They have moments of weakness and prostration which attack the very foundations of their nature. Something in the kindly expression of Amelia's face made him feel a sudden inclination to open out his heart to her. He could not do so to his wife. She would not have understood. Perpetual companionship without any congeniality of thought was an irritating burden to a man of his strong, reserved disposition. Her petty wails and complaints were like drops of water falling on a fiery furnace. They hissed, sputtered, but produced no soothing effect, rather the reverse. He moved uneasily on his cushions and averted his face from the light.

"Miss Dawkins," he said in faltering tones, "have you—have

you come about—Hetty?" He spoke the last word slowly, and with evident difficulty.

"Yes," said Amelia, not attempting to equivocate. "I have."

He shook his head.

"It's of no use. She has chosen to take her life into her own hands, and she must abide by the result. You and I know that she has spoilt it. Well! she must find that fact out for herself. It would be false kindness on my part to condone her offence. She is young, and rash, and headstrong. It will do her good to suffer, even as in my old age she has made me suffer."

"Oh! Mr. Davidson, don't talk like that. I can't bear to hear you. Hetty has been very wrong, very foolish. I don't attempt to defend her conduct. I feel for you deeply—deeply, but she is your only daughter, and surely you will forgive her? If not just at first, after a little."

"Never!" he said sternly, with a spark of his old fire glowing forth. "If this is all you have to say, she need not have sent you begging here."

"Do not wrong her unjustly, Mr. Davidson. She did not send me here. I came of my own accord."

"And why should you mix yourself up in so disagreeable a matter?"

Amelia reddened. She was conscious of insult, nay more, suspicion, but for her friend's sake she remained calm.

"My motive is very simple. Hetty and I have known each other for a good many years, and I happen to be fond of her. It goes to my heart to see her in such distress. She came to us last night. If you had seen the poor thing, I think that even you would have relented. She had hardly any money, nothing but the clothes she stood up in, and to make matters worse, that rascally husband of hers declared he was dining out, and could not possibly give her shelter in his lodgings. She was within an ace of spending the night on a bench in the Park, like the miserable, unfortunate women one reads about. Literally, she did not know where to lay her head."

"Serve her right! Serve her precious well right!" he muttered, though his breath came fast and slow.

"We took her in," resumed Amelia, "and of course she is welcome to stay with us as long as we remain in Homburg, but aunt's eyes are bad, and next week we go to Wiesbaden for her to be

under Dr. Meurer. Some provision must be made for Hetty." And she looked at him hard.

"Let her husband make it," he said shortly.

"Herr Von Kessler can't. No doubt you are aware how extremely small his income is. He can only just live on it himself."

"Damn him!" hissed Mr. Davidson through his clenched teeth. "He has shipwrecked my happiness. Why should I contribute to his?"

"Only for your daughter's sake," rejoined Amelia unflinchingly. "Don't think that it is for him I plead. I dislike and despise him as much as you do. But Hetty is so young and childish for her age; she is so easily led away, and whatever sins she may have committed against you, you cannot let her starve, and that is what will happen if you refuse to give her pecuniary aid."

"She does not deserve any," he said, with a dull flush mounting to his sallow cheek.

"That is not the question," retorted Amelia, waxing bolder and more eloquent. "How can you, as a father and a Christian man, allow your only daughter to die of want, simply because she has made an imprudent marriage? Even if she possessed the common necessities of life, the case would be different. But at present, if we were not here, she has not bread to put into her mouth, nor money enough to secure her a bed. Realize it if you can."

"I don't want to realize it. I only want to blot her out of my existence."

"But you can't. Do you suppose that her memory will not haunt you to the end of your days, that in time you will not grow to reproach yourself for your shortcomings towards her? She has behaved badly, but what chance has she ever had of being on intimate terms with her parents? When she was eight years old, she was packed off to school, and frequently even spent the holidays there."

"It was not my fault," he interrupted. "It was my wife's. She hated the child, and looked upon her as a nuisance."

"It signifies little now whose was the fault. The mischief is done, and believe me, Mr. Davidson, Hetty will be amply punished for her folly later on. If I am not greatly mistaken the man whom she has married will revenge your wrongs. When he finds that the fortune on which he counted is not forthcoming, he is sure to vent his spite on her. You need not grudge the poor thing any

little happiness she may have in the present, for she is bound to be miserable in the future. Karl Von Kessler is selfish to the backbone."

Mr. Davidson did not speak. A terrible struggle was going on within him. He exulted at Amelia's words, and yet his better nature made him feel sorry for Hetty. But yield, oh! dear no. He could not have done it even if he would. He was too rigid, too set, too obstinate, to go back from his word. He preferred a thousand qualms of conscience to such a surrender. His face twitched, his sunken eyes looked heavy and distressed, but the man's mind remained unaltered. It had worked so long in certain grooves that it was a physical impossibility to render it pliant and adaptive. The impressions of minutes cannot do away with the effects of years. Thus the will continues to domineer over the tenderer feelings. Often a pitiful strife arises, but the result is nearly always the same. Habit binds its victim in chains of iron. Thought becomes four prison walls, unbending and confining. He had said to himself, "As she has made her bed, so she must lie upon it," and not all the most painful emotions could induce him to radically alter his decision. Amelia's appeal disturbed but did not convert him, for the simple reason that now, in his advanced years, he was perfectly incapable of reconstructing any opinion at which he had once arrived. The rigidity of old age affected his mind precisely as it did his muscles. The cerebral atoms no longer had it in their power to form fresh combinations.

"You might let Hetty have her clothes, John," suggested Mrs. Davidson, for the first time taking part in the conversation. "There would be no harm in that. She only had on a light, sprigged muslin, and if the weather changes she will want something warmer to wear. Besides, the things are of no use to anyone. I can't turn them to account. They are much too small for me."

"Oh! give her something more than clothes," exclaimed Amelia, disgusted with Mrs. Davidson's cold-bloodedness. "You forget that in a few days Hetty will be in actual want. She must have a roof to cover her head, and food enough to keep body and soul together, else you will be her murderers."

Silence followed this bold speech. For the first time, the girl began to lose courage. It was uphill work trying to soften the stony hearts of these old and unforgiving people. It drove Milly mad to see Mrs. Davidson's fat fingers making believe to knit industriously, and to watch her red, impassive face. Just to think

of that inert mass of solid flesh being dignified by the sacred name of mother! Why, the woman who showed so little natural feeling was not fit to have a child. Mr. Davidson's anger appeared comprehensible and excusable compared with his wife's indifference, which, when Hetty was passing through one of the greatest crises of her life, could only offer her a box of clothes as consolation. She looked at them both with increasing anxiety. The situation seemed almost hopeless.

"You will be murderers if you let Hetty starve," she repeated almost fiercely.

He started as if from a brown study, and turned towards his wife.

"Emma," he said, "how much did it cost to keep Hetty at home?"

"Gracious, John!" she replied, "what a question! Maybe a hundred or a hundred and fifty with her dressmaker's bill. I can't tell you exactly unless I were to tot it all up."

"Thank you. That information is sufficient for my purpose." Then he gazed earnestly at his visitor and said: "Look here, Milly Dawkins, you're a good girl, a very good girl, and I don't like you any the less for the way in which you have stuck up for your friend, and run your head into the lion's den. It's not everybody who would have done it. You tell me in extremely forcible language that I must not let Hetty starve. Very well, I won't. From this day forward I agree to allow her a hundred and fifty pounds a year, to be paid quarterly, in advance, on the one condition that she shall never attempt to see me, nor set foot inside Murchiston Hall. Now"—and his voice rang with a species of triumph—"I flatter myself that even you cannot accuse me of injustice."

"It is not a question of injustice," returned Amelia stoutly, disappointed by the smallness of the sum named, and yet feeling he was making a great concession. "It is a question of mercy and forgiveness. Most people in this world live to regret their unkind actions, but even in my limited experience I have met very few who feel remorse for their kind ones. Oh, Mr. Davidson!" she continued, taking his hand in hers. "Will you not soften your heart still more? I am sure you will be glad later on."

The blood rushed to his pale face in an unhealthy purple wave.

"I have said no once," he rejoined querulously. "Why can't you leave me alone? Hetty has ruined the closing days of my life, and I will not allow that scoundrelly husband of hers to make ducks and drakes with my money when I am gone. They

will have £225 a year. With economy they can support existence. I do not desire to make things too pleasant for them. It is right they should suffer, and learn that when people misbehave themselves so grievously they cannot expect to obtain forgiveness just for the mere asking. As soon as I am well enough to travel, I intend to leave this beastly place. It is not large enough to contain Hetty and us. Tell her so from me. I have nothing more to say."

He lay back, exhausted by the effort of speaking, and his laboured breathing could be heard all over the room. Amelia feared another attack was coming on, and even Mrs. Davidson seemed alarmed.

"You had better go, Miss Dawkins," she said, rising to her feet and letting a ball of red wool fall to the ground. "The doctor particularly said Mr. Davidson must not be excited, and you see what a state he puts himself into whenever Hetty's name is mentioned. He was so weakly and absurdly fond of her that every one else might go to the wall when she was present. And this is the result of his indulgence! I always told him it would end badly, but there's no arguing with an infatuated man. If he had only taken my advice, Hetty would have been at home at this moment and engaged to Lord Charles! But no—of course he thought he knew better than I, and now we both have to suffer for his obstinacy. It's very hard on me," wiping away two slow tears—"very hard indeed."

Amelia made no reply. She shook Mr. Davidson's hand, and, with a sorrowful ring in her young voice, wished him good-bye.

"I'll send the clothes round this afternoon," resumed Mrs. Davidson, recovering very rapidly from her grief. "My best regards to your aunt, and, by the way, you might as well mention to Hetty that, as she is never likely to want the white feather fan her father gave her on her last birthday, I kept it back. Balls are not numerous at Homburg in the winter-time, I expect; and we have several at Manchester. Good-bye, Miss Dawkins, good-bye."

"Well," said Amelia to herself as she descended the stairs, "if I had been in Hetty's place, and had had such a father and mother, I really believe I should have followed her example. That odious old woman would have driven me simply mad, and I can quite understand a sensitive, impulsive girl committing any act of folly under the circumstances."

*(To be continued.)*

## Why?

THE wonder felt by the "intelligent foreigner" at England, and things English, has been a fruitful theme with writers for many a long year. But this is surely one of those cases in which it will repay us to "look at home." Is there nothing in the everyday life of each one of us which can make us wonder? Indeed, to me it seems that it is merely the fact of our being as used to certain things as is the traditional eel to being skinned, that prevents us from crying out all day, "Why? Why? Oh, why?"

Take London for instance. Here are five million people, who, just because they happen to live in this city, can never drive in a hired open carriage. I have often put this case before my fellow-sufferers, and their answer invariably has been, "Oh, it's the climate."

Now, I ask any unprejudiced observer of meteorological and climatic conditions, whether the London climate really differs so very materially from that of Liverpool, or Birmingham, or Windsor? Again, every one out of Hanwell agrees that during the greater part of the summer it is pleasanter to drink tea or to dine out of doors than in. In fact, the sufferings entailed upon Londoners, even in the best appointed club, on a sultry day, are such as would (if endured from religious motives) go far towards making a very respectable saint. The stroll or the drive in the Park is prolonged to the very furthest limit, because dinner (a hot meal in more senses than one) is felt to be a burden. As for balls, the agonies which their votaries endure are quite beyond pen and ink to describe. Now, I will be bold enough to say that these torments are simply endured because no one has the courage to initiate a change. There is no earthly reason why balconies should not be built large enough to admit of a very considerable dinner party being given in them. As for dancing, why, when men go to the trouble of building ball-rooms, they should not build them with sliding roofs, when such things would change misery into pleasure, is more than any one can understand.

It is no answer to say that this would entail too great an expense. The real answer is that English people think it not

*convenable* to enjoy in their own country what abroad they thoroughly appreciate. Even our laws are against it. Witness an instance. It was but a very few years ago that a most sensible man who kept a confectioner's shop in the west of London, took advantage of an enormously broad pavement outside his windows, and invited his customers to partake of refreshment in the open air. Such a thing in England! It could not be tolerated for an instant. This man of sense was hauled off to the nearest magistrate and fined. Technically, I do not doubt the police were right to interfere, as the confectioner was in some sort a trespasser, but what egregious folly not to legalize a trespass which hurts no one, and adds to the comfort of life!

Then why, oh why, is the telephone, which ranks as quite an old invention, the exception instead of the rule? It required the war in Zululand to show the necessity of a telegraph direct to our South African colony. What can avail to give us the telephone, I wonder?

Paris and Brussels have been talking audibly to each other for years, and yet, if I asked that courteous young lady at the Exchange (whose voice I know so well, though I have never seen her) to switch me on to Plymouth, she would probably request me not to be a—— I mean, not to waste her time.

Then what a wicked regulation it is that prevents one writing post-cards under the post-office roof! Why, in the name of all that's postal, *should* the "desks" (what a misnomer!) be "reserved exclusively for filling up order forms, and for writing telegrams?" And even for these entertainments the accommodation is miserable. First, you have to tuck your umbrella or stick under the left arm (with the moral certainty that some hurried customer or some rushing telegraph boy will charge full tilt against it, converting you into a sort of horizontal windlass); then you must try to disentangle the stump of what was once a pencil from the yards of string which pinion it to the desk; then you find that the lead is exhausted, and you try another. That failing, you move to the one desk that boasts a pen and ink. Phœbus, what nibs! like the stilts of an acrobat, while the ink is—well, it may have been ink once on a time. Abroad, one can sit down in any post-office comfortably and write away to one's heart's content—post-cards, letters, or what not. And while on matters postal, I should like to know why it is that one cannot buy postal orders or post-office

orders as long as the office is open to the public. And if I were a man of thrift (which I am not), I might ask why Savings Bank business should be so strictly limited to certain sacred hours.

Kensington Gardens we are all proud of—and so are we of our military bands. And yet the music kiosk in Kensington Gardens is always deserted,\* and no one ever hears a note of music within a mile of it. Why?

And why should railway companies be allowed to make her Majesty's lieges suffer an inferno from cold all through our long winter, and merely provide (generally on payment of a tip) a miserably inadequate "foot-warmer," and that only in first-class carriages? Climate at least cannot explain *this*. Every carriage abroad, even the "aristocratic third," is warmed all the winter through.

And now a word about literature. When are publishers going to learn that it is as rude to their customers to sell them uncut books as it would be for hotel-keepers to provide their guests with "apple-pie" beds? I see with joy that some of the newest of the "weeklies" are setting a good example in this respect, and that some of their elder brothers are imitating it, but there is still much to be desired. Then it ought to be a capital offence for a publisher to issue any book, other than a novel, without an index. When Parliament has time to do anything useful at all, it will see to this, I trust.

But you will probably have had enough of my grumbling, so I will end. But there is just one more "why?" I should like to ask. It is this (and I believe it will appeal to a large public):

I hate shaving myself. I therefore get some one to do it for me. Now can any scientific man inform me why it *invariably* happens that the sponge which the barber employs has what feels like the sharp fragment of a shell adhering to it? Wherever I go it is the same. And now that I have worked myself up to express the troubles—minor ones, perhaps, but troubles none the less—which afflict ordinary English humanity, I feel a sympathy of which I could have never believed myself capable with that terrible Miss Straithmere in "Happy Thoughts," who worried Mr. Burnand so much on board the yacht by her perpetual iteration of "Why? Do tell me—*Why?*"

WILFRID WILBERFORCE.

\* It is now removed altogether!

## A Romance of Modern London.

By CURTIS YORKE,

Author of "HUSH!" "THE MYSTERY OF BELGRAVE SQUARE," "THE BROWN PORTMANTEAU," "DUDLEY," "THE WILD RUTHVENS," "THAT LITTLE GIRL," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER VII.

#### THE GRUB BECOMES A BUTTERFLY.

"O World ! so few the years we live  
Would that the life which thou dost give  
Were life indeed !"

LONGFELLOW.

"I knew from every tone of his voice, every chance expression of his honest eyes, that he was one of those characters in which we may be sure that for each feeling they express lies a countless wealth of the same, unexpressed, below ; a character the keystone of which was that whereon is built all liking and all love—*dependableness*. He was one whom you may be long in knowing, but whom the more you know the more you trust, and once trusting you trust for ever."

Author of "*John Halifax*."

ON a bright spring afternoon, a small-faced slender girl of eighteen was lying back in a low chair in the conservatory which opened out of a Philistinish drawing-room not altogether strange to us. A tall patrician-looking young man, who surveyed life through a single eyeglass and over a heavy fair moustache, was leaning against one of the slender iron pillars, looking down at his companion with a faint smile upon his well-cut lips. She was looking up saucily from under her long lashes, and her eyes, though not her lips, were smiling. Was it our old friend Bee who had thus rushed up into young ladyhood, leaving not only her childish days but her school days behind her ? If so, she was wonderfully changed, wonderfully improved, and yet—there were moments when she looked almost a child again.

Her companion was Sir Cyril Northburgh, looking much the same as he had done six years ago, except that his calm colour-

less face was a shade calmer and more colourless, his cold eyes a trifle colder, and that he wore the moustache before alluded to.

"And so," he was saying in his slow tired voice—"you are really a finished young lady. Do you know it makes me feel fearfully old? It seems an incredibly short time ago since you wore frocks of no length to speak of, and danced with joy, or cried with rage upon the slightest provocation. I remember you slapped me once," he added reflectively.

Bee laughed—such a clear, ringing, child's laugh!

"Did I?" she said. "What a little vixen I must have been."

"I remember, too," he went on, pulling his moustache lazily—"how you used to worship that very estimable young man, who, I understand, adopted you at an early stage of your existence, and how ——"

But the girl interrupted him.

"Don't speak in that slighting way of Douglas, if you please," she said, her small face flushing angrily. "He is one of my dearest friends, and always will be. He was kind to me when I had no one else to be kind to me. And he is worth a hundred of——"

"Of such as I!" put in her companion placidly. "Yes, I know. I never was an estimable young man, even in my palmiest days. I'm afraid you are a vixen still, Bee—in spite of Cheltenham and Dresden. But is it permitted that I call you Bee?—or must I say Miss Adeane for the future?"

"Oh, I don't mind," was the indifferent answer—"so long as you don't call me Katharine," she added somewhat petulantly.

"Katharine?—why not Katharine?" he said in his tranquil voice. "It is a pretty name, and we have Shakespeare's authority for considering it a suitable one for young ladies of—er—uncertain temper."

But Bee was not listening to him.

"Do you know," she said, leaning forward in her chair, and speaking with a dreamy far-away look in her eyes—"I have not seen Douglas Conrath for nearly six years."

Sir Cyril altered his position slightly.

"May I suggest that that was Mr. Conrath's own loss?" he said after a pause.

"Each time I have been home I have written to him," continued the girl mournfully; "but he has not answered my last two or three letters, and he has never come to see me—not once!"

"Young cub!" muttered her companion under his breath.

"It seems so strange," Bee went on; "because you know in heart we really are brother and sister, and always shall be."

Sir Cyril was silent.

"My mother tells me that you and Fay are to be presented at the next Drawing-room," he said, after a minute, with a palpable intention of changing the conversation.

"Yes," said the girl slowly—"I suppose so. Fay is looking forward to it very much."

"And are not you?" he said with languid interest.

"I don't know. Somehow I don't think I am. But I suppose it is necessary"—this with a small sigh. "Grandfather says so."

"And he is an authority, of course," observed Cyril gravely.

"Have you seen Fay to-day, and did she say she was coming here?" asked the girl presently.

"I saw her this morning, and she said she was coming this afternoon. I should think she will be here shortly. By the way, have you any engagement for to-morrow morning?"

"Yes," she answered promptly; "I am going to the National Gallery."

"To the National Gallery? Good Heavens! What for?"

"Because I have never been there. Have you?"

"Most certainly not. Why should I? I should as soon think of visiting the Tower or Madame Tussaud's."

"And have you never been to either of these places?"—this with a rising inflection of unqualified amazement.

"Never. Am I a country cousin that I should so degrade myself?"

At this moment a thin piquant face peeped in at the door of the conservatory.

"Oh, there you are," said a high rapid voice. "And you, Cyril? My dear Bee, do send him away. I have such heaps of things to talk to you about, and to tell you."

"What?—since yesterday?" asked Sir Cyril satirically.

"Pooh—yesterday! That is as good as weeks ago in London, my dear cousin. Bee—*can* you believe that it is little over a month since we left that melancholy German town? Why, it seems like a year! But listen. Mother has persuaded Mrs. Chandler to let your gown be exactly the same as mine for the Drawing-room. Your grandmother had quite set her heart upon your

appearing in blue satin trimmed with red roses ; but thank Heaven—and mother's eloquence—that is mercifully averted."

"And what are your gowns to be?" inquired Cyril with a faint smile.

"White satin with gold embroidery," answered his cousin. "Won't they be lovely? Why, we shall look just like ——"

"Angels," put in Cyril, strangling a yawn. "Twin-angels. Awfully fetching."

"Oh, Cyril—do go away. You are so silly."

"Thanks. I am going. I came to ask Bee—yes, she has given me permission to call her Bee, as of old—if she will ride with me to-morrow morning. Will you, Bee? The Gallery can wait. Fay is coming too."

"Am I?" said that young lady, raising her eyebrows. "Well, after all, perhaps I may. My new habit came home yesterday."

"Ye gods!" murmured Cyril—"what fetishes you girls do make of your dressmakers, and tailors, and milliners! If an angel came down to take you to Heaven, I believe you wouldn't go until you had got some new clothes, and learned the latest shape in wings."

"Don't be profane, Cyril. It's such horribly bad form now," said Fay sharply.

"You newly-fledged chicken!" he said, surveying her with lazy amusement—"who told you what was good and what was bad form? Don't you know that the word 'form' itself is out of print now in our social shibboleth?"

As he spoke he walked over to where Bee, who had risen, was bending over a heavily-scented flowering shrub. She answered his "Good-bye" rather shortly—or he thought so.

"What is the matter?" he said in a low voice. "Have I offended you?"

"No," she answered, raising her clear eyes to his. "But—I don't like to hear you speak—as you did just now."

He was silent for a moment or two; then he said slowly:

"Will you give me one of these flowers?"

She did not answer, and he added:

"I shall not offend again."

He took the flower, touched her hand lightly, and went out, closing the door somewhat sharply behind him.

"Well, really, I think Cyril might have said good-afternoon to

me," said Fay, with a good-humoured laugh. "I believe you have bewitched him, Bee."

She pulled off her hat and gloves as she spoke, and threw herself into a green wire chair.

Fay Dinwoodie, at nineteen, was less pronounced in many ways than in her childhood. She was prettier, too, though far from being a beauty. Some women called her interesting-looking, others peculiar-looking. Men, especially young men, pronounced her "not bad-looking, and awful fun to talk to, don't you know." To-day she was looking rather plain and sallow; her flaxen hair was less becomingly arranged than usual, and the brown eyes, under their strongly-marked brows, lacked lustre and vivacity. Fay's strong point was her figure, which was slim as to waist, and generous as to bust, "clipper-built" as to neck and limbs. Her hands, too, were small and white and slender, and she knew it, and made play with them accordingly.

Bee was by no means a beauty either; but by virtue of her tawny hair, with its pretty rebellious wave, her clear, childlike eyes, and her marvellously pure, ivory-coloured complexion, she was very attractive to look upon.

The two girls chatted and laughed, and drew fascinating pictures of their probable gaieties—at least Fay did—until late in the afternoon. But Bee was less talkative than usual. She was haunted by a little story she had been reading in *Temple Bar*, signed "Michael Armstrong." It was strange, she thought—so many tricks and turns of expression reminded her of Douglas. Dear old Douglas! how long, how very long a time it was since she had seen him!

As it happened she saw him very soon.

"Granny," she said that evening at dinner, when the dessert was upon the table, and the servants had left the room, "I should like to ask Douglas Conrath to come and see me one day soon. You know it is years since we saw each other, and I shouldn't like him to think that—that I had forgotten him."

Her grandfather looked up from his walnuts with a quick frown.

"God bless my soul, Katharine, what sentimental nonsense is this?" he said loudly and aggressively. "A very good thing if the fellow does think you have forgotten him. You must make up your mind to forget him, young lady. After all I've done for

you, and all the money I've spent upon you, do you suppose I'll allow you to degrade yourself and me by asking shabby, cheeky young cads to my house, and—and"—lashing himself up into fury—"having my servants opening my doors to all the riff-raff of London?"

Bee rose to her feet, her eyes flashing, her lips trembling. The old passionate temper was only scotched, not killed; and she looked like a little fury as she said, in a voice inarticulate with anger:

"How dare you speak so of Douglas, grandfather? How dare you? Should I be any the better girl, do you think, if I were ungrateful enough to forget all his kindness to me in the old days? Do you know that I shall always think of him as my brother—always? and always love him better than anybody else in the world?"

Almost choking with rage, Mr. Chandler rose to his feet, upsetting his port over the table-cloth as he did so.

"What—*what!*" he shouted. "Do you mean to tell me that you are in love with the fellow?—that you would *marry* him?"

The girl recoiled as if he had struck her. For a moment or two she stood gazing at him with wide, half-incredulous eyes. A burning flush covered her face, then receded, leaving it very white.

"Grandfather!" she said in a low shocked voice—"oh, grandfather! No—no—*no!* You forget that he is my brother."

"Oh, brothers be damned!" he exclaimed furiously. "I'll warrant he has other views than figuring as a *brother* to one of the richest heiresses in England. He——"

"Stop, grandfather," she said, turning a white determined little face towards him. "One other word, and I will leave your house to-night, and never come back as long as I live. I——"

Here Mrs. Chandler, who had hitherto sat in nervous silence, broke in excitedly:

"Chandler, for pity's sake let the child alone. Don't you see you're taking the very way to make her stand up for the lad, and think far more of him than she would do if you were quiet and sensible about it. And in the name of patience don't shout so. You'll have all the servants at the keyhole next."

"Hold your tongue, Eliza," he returned fiercely. "Am I master in my own house, or am I not?"

Nevertheless he cooled down somewhat, for he had said more than he meant to say; and besides it suddenly occurred to him that his wife was right—he was taking the best way to make the girl think more of this inconvenient young fellow than there was any occasion for.

"Sit down, girl," he said gruffly, throwing himself into his chair again. "Sit down, and don't make a fool of yourself. And let us have no more high-falutin' threats of leaving my house. If you do go—you don't come back again, mind you! Ungrateful little minx! Come here and give me a kiss. Where would you be, I'd like to know, if I hadn't lifted you out of the dirt—as one might say—and made you as fine as the best of them? Eh? eh? Come here and kiss me, d'ye hear?"

Bee kissed him reluctantly, and then went slowly out of the room. She was conscious that she had indulged in heroics of a somewhat theatrical nature, and felt rather ashamed of her tragical outburst.

"And after all, why should I care what he says, the vulgar old creature!" she thought passionately. "Marry Douglas!—dear old Douglas! The idea!"

And, angry though she was, an irrepressible laugh broke from her soft red lips, showing that as far as Douglas was concerned she was perfectly heart-whole.

A few days later, she and Fay chanced to be in the Grosvenor Gallery. Bee was very fond of roaming through the galleries, for she was a genuine art-lover. Fay's interest in picture-galleries, on the other hand, depended entirely upon whom she might meet there—of the sterner sex, of course; for, with the exception of Bee, Miss Dinwoodie was not given to wasting her sweetness upon her own. She openly acknowledged that she "hated pictures," and pronounced most of our most cherished art-productions "rubbish," showering unsparing ridicule upon the monstrosities in the way of anatomy and vegetation before which we are wont to fall into hypocritical raptures. Bee left these alone, and revelled among the works of less renowned artists, who only aimed at reproducing nature as it appears to the uninitiated.

"Look, Bee," said Fay suddenly—"isn't that your friend Douglas Conrath? And yet—is it? Yes, it is. How much improved he is! Why he looks almost handsome."

Bee looked, and saw a young man, with a quiet clever face and

dark blue eyes, standing at some little distance from them. Yes, it was Douglas. His face was not much changed, save for the dark brown moustache which almost hid his mouth. Bee would have known him anywhere.

He did not see her apparently. He was standing before one of the principal pictures of the year, jotting down notes at intervals in a small memorandum-book.

"Well, isn't it?" said Fay impatiently.

"Yes—it is Douglas."

"And are you not going to speak to him?"

"Yes—if he comes this way."

Just then the young man turned, and walked slowly down the room to where the girls were standing. He saw them, and a flash of recognition passed over his face. He half-stopped; then lifted his hat gravely, and passed on.

But Fay hurried after him, and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Why, Mr. Conrath—how pleased I am to see you," she said with her sweetest smile. "Were you really going to pass your old friends without speaking?"

He stopped then, of course, and took the little grey-gloved hand she held out to him. Then he smiled—the slow rare smile that Bee remembered so well.

"I really hardly knew you," he said. "You must remember I have not seen you for very many years."

As he spoke he turned to Bee, and for the fraction of a second her fingers rested in his.

"Our memories are better than yours, you see," she said with a saucy smile. "We knew you at once."

"I did not say I did not know you," he answered quietly; "I was speaking of Miss Dinwoodie."

Was it the recollection of her grandfather's ill-advised words that made Bee feel nervous and embarrassed in the presence of her old friend? Perhaps.

"Are you still living in that dreadful place at Westminster?" asked Fay, her observant brown eyes taking in every detail of the young man's costume and general turn-out.

"No; I left Garth Street two years ago."

"Then," said Bee quickly, "you did not get my last three letters?"

"I have not had any letters from you for more than a year," he said in somewhat curt tones.

"Where are you living now?" put in Fay in her quick decided voice.

"In Guilford Street, Bloomsbury," he answered. "I daresay you will think that only a degree less 'dreadful' than Garth Street."

"And what have you been doing, Douglas?" said Bee, who had recovered her self-possession by this time and dismissed her grandfather's insinuations as unworthy of consideration. "You are looking thin and tired. Have you been working very hard?"

"No," he answered lightly, "I have not been working hard at all. And I'm afraid my doings, such as they are, would not be at all interesting to either you or Miss Dinwoodie."

"I remember you used to write, long ago—for the magazines, I mean. Do you ever write anything now?" said Bee, feeling somehow that Douglas and she had drifted very far away from each other.

"A little," he replied evasively.

"I never see any of your articles," observed Fay in a disapproving voice. "I hope you are not one of these dreadfully clever young men," she added earnestly. "I shall be so disappointed if you are. You don't *look* a bit like an author."

"How ought an author to look, then, Miss Dinwoodie?" he asked, with the merest suspicion of a smile.

"Oh, well—as if they'd no brains to spare for ordinary conversation, and as if clothes, and manners, and personal niceness generally, were less than nothing to them. I mean male authors of course. I've never met any female ones."

"But, Fay," said Bee laughing, "I didn't know you had met any authors at all. When did you?"

"The night before last, when mother and I dined at Aunt Emily's. There were two of them. That man Waterbury Craven, who wrote 'Will he be Silent?' and another, I think his name was Larkspur, or something like that. He writes blank verse, I believe; I'm sure he couldn't write anything *but* blank verse—the very blankest. He had a face like a fish, and the other was as like one of the vultures in the Zoo as he could be; and they both looked as if their hair had never been cut since they were born. But of course there may be authors with common sense and an ordinarily decent appearance, and something to say for themselves. I don't know. Mr. Conrath," she added suddenly, "will you

come and see us? Mother is always at home on first Fridays. I'll tell her to send you a card if you will give me your address. Now don't say you never go anywhere. I know you're going to make an exception in our favour. Promise to come, and then I know you will. Bee used to say you always kept your promises."

"Yes, do, Douglas," said Bee. "I shall be there, and we can talk, you know. I have so many things to say to you."

However, Douglas did not promise. He gave his address to Fay—upon her reminding him that he had not done so—and, saying he had an engagement for which he was already late, he went away.

"I like your Douglas, do you know," said Fay reflectively, as they walked up Bond Street a quarter of an hour or so later. "He is rather distinguished-looking, and he *has* such beautiful eyes."

"He always had dear, kind, true eyes," Bee said in a doubtful sort of voice, "but I don't know about their being beautiful. They are just Douglas's eyes to me, you know," she added—"not like any one else's."

"Well, at any rate, he is a nice fellow—a very nice fellow, and I shall see that mother sends him a card," returned Fay decidedly. "He looks like a *man*—a real man. All the men I've met since I came home look for all the world like so many well-dressed gentlemanly oysters."

"What, your cousin Cyril too?" said Bee in a mischievous voice. "You used to consider him rather a demi-god, surely?"

"Oh, Cyril is all very well—but he is a kind of oyster too. I daresay he may develop a pearl or two in time. He hasn't yet. The world has treated him too well."

\* \* \* \* \*

After all Douglas did put in an appearance at the Dinwoodies' on the following Friday, having received a card intimating that Lady Dinwoodie would be "at home" from four to seven on that day.

The rooms were pretty well filled when he got there, and it was some time before he caught sight of Fay, who, in a bewildering and "fetching" gown of some pale blue stuff, was sustaining a sharp running fire of repartee with a group of irreproachably expressionless young men. When she saw Douglas, she came forward at once with a pleased smile.

"So good of you to come," she said cordially. "I was afraid you wouldn't. Come and let me introduce you to my mother."

Lady Dinwoodie received him with moderate civility. Her manner, indeed, was apt to be chilly to those from whose acquaintance no benefit, social or otherwise, was to be gained. Douglas, for his part, had never felt less inclined to make himself agreeable. When he had exchanged a couple of stiff remarks with his hostess, he stood silent, erect, and with a somewhat bitter smile on his lips, while she sailed away to greet fresh arrivals. Fay was conversing gaily with a fat old duchess, who really looked not unlike Mrs. Chandler. Everybody was talking and laughing, interchanging greetings with those they knew, or being introduced to those they did not know. Douglas felt he had been a fool to come; he knew nobody, and nobody wanted to know him. Bee was evidently not there.

Just then he saw her. She was standing in one of the windows with Sir Cyril Northburgh. The latter was looking rather less bored than usual, and was evidently listening with interest to what his companion was saying. She was looking very pretty. As Douglas looked at the slender girlish figure, at the sweet innocent face that mingled the freshness of childhood with a new quaint dignity, he fell into a reverie—a reverie which showed him such a different Bee—a Bee in shabby frocks and doubtful shoes—a Bee whose world was bounded by the little attic-room in Garth Street, who—

"How are you, Douglas?" said the voice of Bee herself. "So you came after all. I am so glad. I think you have met Sir Cyril Northburgh," she added.

Both men bowed slightly. Neither, it appeared, had any recollection of having met before.

Presently Sir Cyril moved away, and Bee said hurriedly:

"Come into the other room, Douglas. There are fewer people there, and we can talk. I know granny is looking for me. We are going to some man's studio to see his pictures. Let us sit down here. It seems so very, very long since I talked to you. Do you know I thought you quite stiff to me at the Grosvenor the other day? And I'm sure if Fay hadn't stopped you, you wouldn't have spoken to us. I suppose you never even thought of coming to see me, though I wrote to tell you I had come home."

"You forget," he said slowly. "I did not get your letters—latterly."

"Ah, well, never mind now. Tell me all you are doing. Have you—are you in any——"

"Any situation?" he said in a quiet voice. "Yes. I am secretary to an old gentleman of the name of Redman, and my salary has been lately raised to £150 a year. Do you think, Bee, that your grandfather will care to acknowledge the acquaintance of such an insignificant young man? Don't you think we had better agree to—drop out of each other's lives in the meantime?" His voice was gentle enough, but it held a slightly ironical inflection which Bee was quick to notice.

"Why, Douglas——" she said reproachfully. "But of course you don't mean that. As for grandfather, one can always tell the kind of young men *he* will care to acknowledge the acquaintance of"—this with an impatient toss of her compact little head. "Rich young men—titled young men—successful young men—any kind of young men whose friendship will add to the glorification of Joseph Chandler. Do you know," she added with infinite scorn, "that he calls himself *Chandleur* now, with the accent on the last syllable? Oh, he is insufferable! If it is a crime to hate one's grandfather, I am a most hardened and unrepentant criminal. If you knew, Douglas, how I used to dread coming home for the holidays, just because of grandfather. Granny isn't so bad—poor granny!—for though she is vulgar, she doesn't pretend to be anything else; but grandfather!—he is *impossible*! And then his conversation—always about how he became rich, or about what he calls 'swells'—and their entertainments. As for taking the slightest interest in anything either political or literary or scientific, why, he would never think of it. There is not a book in the house, except the calf-bound volumes that furnish the library, and which have never been opened. Of course I have my own books. I don't know what I should do without them. Grandfather thinks women shouldn't read anything but the Bible and Blair's sermons, and little silly tales fit for children. I believe he thinks Ruskin is a novelist, and Carlyle a successful writer of burlesques, and has a vague idea that George Eliot was a comic actor," she added with a naughty laugh.

"Nevertheless he has been kind to you, Bee," said Douglas. "Are you not a little hard upon him?"

"Perhaps I am," she admitted. "And after all I am not a fixture at Portland Place. I suppose I shall be married one of these days. I sometimes think I shall marry the first unobjectionable suitor who presents himself. No man *could* be worse to live with than grandfather."

"Good God! child—don't say such horrible things," said the young man hastily. "You don't know what you're talking about. Of course I have no right to advise you, or to take exception to anything you may say; but if you knew what sacrilege it seems——"

He stopped, and bit his lip with a sudden frown.

"Why, Douglas, I was only joking," she said laughing. "And why should you not lecture me if you want to? You were not always so ceremonious. Ah, dear me, I sometimes wish I were back again in dear old Garth Street. I remember it so well—so well."

He looked down at her with a half-smile.

"Ah, Bee, you have grown out of Garth Street, my dear."

They talked for quite a long time after that—so long, indeed, that Bee forgot all about her grandmother, who finally came to look for her in rather a bad temper.

"For the horses have been standing there for the last couple of hours, Katharine; and you know nothing makes your grandfather so wild. What did you say? Mr. Conrath? Oh, how are you, Mr. Conrath? I shouldn't have known you, I'm sure. Good afternoon. Do come away, child."

Douglas remained standing where they had left him. Someone was singing. It was an old, old song, with a quaint, curiously monotonous refrain, and the singer—who did not disdain to let the words be intelligible to her hearers—rendered it most exquisitely. It carried the young man back—back to his early boyhood; for it was a song he had often heard his mother sing. For a moment or two he seemed to see the surging, gaily-dressed crowd through a heavy mist; then the mist cleared away, and Fay Dinwoodie stood beside him.

"How sad you look!" she said softly.

"Do I?" he answered in a strange voice. "I daresay I do. I was thinking of something sad."

"How different you are from most men," she said slowly, after a minute. "You don't know how refreshing it is, for one thing, to see men talk without a smile."

He was smiling now, however.

"Has your knowledge of my unhappy sex been gained during the last few weeks?" he asked.

"Why, no, of course not. You forget that, except this last year when we were in Dresden, we have always come home at Midsummer and Christmas and Easter. And there were always men coming about, you know—at least, they called themselves men."

Just then Sir Cyril approached them, and Douglas, who was not fond of being patronized, took his departure.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"IT IS WRITTEN!"

"Life is not as the idle ore,  
But ever dug from central gloom;  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,  
And battered with the shocks of doom  
To shape and use." . . . . .

"You've grown acquainted with your heart,  
And searched what stirred it so.  
Alas! you found it love!"

FLETCHER.

To be twenty-seven years old, and to be only in receipt of something a little over £150 a year, with no immediate prospect of increasing that not very considerable income, is apt to cause depression under almost any circumstances. If one chances at the same time to be possessed by the restless demon of ambition, the depression may become abnormal.

Young Conrath used to feel rather downhearted in those days. True, his work was light, though constant; Mr. Redman was kind, and even friendly, and it was quite possible he might in time increase or even double his secretary's salary. But Douglas was not the man to plod through life upon two or three hundred a year. His mind was progressive; his career must be progressive too. So he fretted and worried, and ate his heart out, as

men do when they see their best years flitting by swiftly and relentlessly, hand-in-hand with their destiny.

He could hardly be said to have made much progress in his literary career. To be sure a stray article or short story had occasionally been accepted by one or other of the magazines, chiefly through Mr. Redman's influence. He had succeeded, too, in getting a certain obscure firm of publishers to bring out his one-volume novel (after it had travelled—during the space of three years—nearly all over London), and been re-written at least three times. He was persuaded to pay a small sum towards the expenses thereof, with very fair promises as to the sharing of profits. It appeared, however, that there were no profits, for the book did not "sell," was taken little notice of by the reviewers, and soon departed into that limbo which mercifully swallows up superfluous literature. The firm and its representatives presumably followed it, for one fine afternoon Douglas found the offices shut up, and a notice tacked upon the door to the effect that they were "to let." The firm appeared shortly afterwards in the bankruptcy list, and subsequently melted away to be heard of no more. Whereupon our disgusted and indignant author fell to work upon another book, in which he so systematically "slated" the publishing profession in general that it was no wonder the MS. found its way home (like Bo Peep's sheep) with marvellous promptitude and regularity. After this he eschewed authorship for some time.

One night, shortly after Lady Dinwoodie's "At Home," Douglas was dining with Mr. Redman. The old gentleman often asked him to dine and spend the evening with him, for in his queer, rough fashion he liked his young secretary and enjoyed his conversation. He was a remarkably well-read man himself, and had long since given Douglas the run of his valuable library, a privilege which the latter was not slow to take advantage of. The young man learned much, too, from his employer's conversation and experience. Simon Redman had travelled pretty nearly all over the two hemispheres, and as he had travelled more intelligently than the average globe-trotter, his impressions were worth hearing and recording. To-night he was a less entertaining companion than usual. He spoke but little, and seemed preoccupied and ill at ease.

After dinner they adjourned, as usual, to the smoking-room,

where claret and cigars awaited them. The old gentleman poured out two glasses of claret, handed Douglas a cigar and lit one for himself, then said abruptly:

"I'm going to raise your salary, Conrath. Not that I think you are underpaid, mind you! But I choose to raise it. After this you shall have two hundred."

"You are very good, sir," said Douglas quietly, as he struck a match. "I'm very much obliged to you."

"Well, well," muttered the other, "that'll do. You needn't thank me."

A short silence followed, then Mr. Redman said slowly:

"Have you ever met my nephew, Maxwell Fenwicke?"

"No—never."

"He's coming here to-night," continued the old gentleman. "He's been away for seven years, travelling about, the Lord knows where, and spending money—*my* money!" This with a bang upon the table that made the glasses ring. "I suppose the money is done now—I stopped his allowance last January—and he's come home for more. I know his ways. But he will find his mistake—he will find his mistake."

"Is he a young man?" inquired Douglas somewhat abruptly—"a lad, I mean?"

"A lad? How old are you?" was the fierce answer.

"I am twenty-seven."

"Well, Maxwell Fenwicke is thirty-three, or perhaps another year added to that. A rolling-stone—a spendthrift—a thorn in my flesh—and yet—damn it all!—I like the fellow!"

Here the door opened, and "Mr. Fenwicke" was announced. A young-looking man came into the room, who, if he was thirty-three, certainly carried his years remarkably well. He was slenderly built and very dark, with an aquiline type of face, unadorned by moustache, beard, or whiskers. The eyes were very deeply set, and held a latent twinkle. Altogether it was rather a nice face, if a little wanting in determination as regarded the mouth and chin.

"Well, uncle," he said, in an irresistibly jovial voice, "how *are* you? This is a meeting now—after all these years!"

"How are you, sir?" returned his uncle with dignity. "Allow me to introduce my secretary, Mr. Douglas Conrath—a very painstaking, sensible, and, as far as I know, virtuous young fellow."

Both the younger men smiled involuntarily at this unique introduction, and with a simultaneous impulse shook hands cordially.

"Glad to meet you—glad to meet you," said the new-comer in his hearty voice. "I hope—I *hope* my respected uncle has maligned you. Ha! ha!" And he laughed gaily, and helped himself to a cigar. He looked perfectly certain of his welcome, and almost provokingly unconscious of the heavy frown upon his uncle's face. And by degrees the frown lifted, and gave way to a curious rugged smile, like the uncertain gleam of a struggling sun on grim mountains after a storm.

"I've a piece of news for you, Uncle Simon," said Fenwicke, when an hour had passed pleasantly enough. "What do you think it is?"

"Don't know," gruffly. "Going to be married, I suppose, and bring into the world half-a-dozen or so of scatterbrained spend-thrifts like yourself—for me to keep. But I won't do it, mind you!—I won't do it, sir! So be warned in time."

His nephew's face grew suddenly grave. He filled his glass again and lit a fresh cigar before he answered.

"No, no," he said in a low emphatic voice. "I know I'm a fool, but I'm not such a fool as to put my head into *that* noose. No," he added, after a minute, "my news is that an old lady, who, it appears, is—or was—my godmother, has died, and left me a small estate in the most un-get-atable place in Cornwall."

"Ay, ay," said Mr. Redman, with an air of interest. "What kind of place is it? Does any ready money go with it?"

"No, not a sixpence," was the laughing answer. "I went down to see it yesterday, and found a wild, uncultivated tract of about a hundred acres, with a tumble-down house—almost a ruin—and that's all," he concluded good-humouredly.

"Humph!" grunted his uncle. "Then I don't see that you're much better off than you were before."

"Well, no, neither do I," cheerfully, "unless I could sell it. But it's not exactly the kind of place any one but a lunatic would think of buying, and that's the truth. It has a queer crackjaw name, by the way—Poldornalupe. My benefactress's name was—let me see—Emerson, I think. Yes—Emerson. So you see I have blossomed out into a real live landed proprietor, turned over a new leaf, and intend posing as a reformed character."

"Ah!" was the uncompromising answer.

"I've another piece of news, though," went on Fenwicke, his eyes twinkling merrily.

"Well!" in a dry voice.

"Well—I've made a little fortune in mines out there."

"Out where?"

"Mexico," laconically. "Bought shares. Sold them at a big profit. Made enough to keep me from starving for a good bit, you know."

"Indeed, I'm glad to hear it. But steer clear of mines, my lad; they're risky things—infernally risky. If you've made money, stick to it. I've been bitten with mining fever myself, and—— There, I'm tired"—the speaker broke off suddenly. "Good-night to you both. Where are you staying, Max?"

"I've taken rooms in Charles Street—convenient, you know. Good-night, uncle; I'll look you up in a day or two."

Douglas rose to say good-night also, and he and Fenwicke went out together.

"Look here," said the latter genially, as they stood in the street in the fair spring moonlight, "it's not late; come up to my rooms and have a pipe. Unless you've any other engagement," he added.

As Douglas had no other engagement, and as he had taken rather a liking to this odd young man, he went; and they sat talking and smoking until far into the small hours.

It was a new and pleasant experience for Douglas, for, with the exception of old Simon Redman, he had no friends; and since the days when he and Ralph Debenham had talked in the little room at Garth Street he had never felt impelled to talk of himself, or his thoughts and aspirations. To-night he surprised himself by talking to Fenwicke as if he had known him all his life. Fenwicke was a capital listener, and in spite of his offhand, careless manner, he had a way of drawing out confidences from those around him.

Thus they talked, not knowing that it was written in the book of fate that henceforth their lives were to be closely woven together, and were to affect each other in a way neither could dream of—then.

Things happen so. We get up and go out to our daily occupations some fine morning, little thinking that we have come to a curve or a sharp corner in our destiny—that fate, in some very ordinary shape perhaps, is waiting for us

silently, to make or mar all our future comings and goings. A chance meeting ; a letter ; a visit ; a seemingly unimportant decision for or against—and hey! presto! the whole course of our life is changed for good or evil !

X “Alas! how easily things go wrong—  
A sigh too deep or a kiss too long—  
And then a mist and a blinding rain,  
And life is never the same again.”

Yes, but things “go right” just as easily and as suddenly. To-day—within the next few hours, perhaps—the burden we have borne so long may be about to roll from our tired shoulders, leaving us to walk erect and free once more. Look up and hope, doubting heart! It is always too soon—just too soon—to despair.

That very morning Douglas had left his lodgings in a fearful fit of the blues. As he let himself in to-night he felt almost light-hearted. Two cheering things had happened to him. His salary had been raised, for one thing; and he had found a friend.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was about six months later—long after Bee had made her curtsy to her sovereign, and been launched into countless London gaieties. Douglas caught glimpses of her now and then, driving in her grandfather's handsomely-appointed carriage, or read her name in the lists of the guests at fashionable entertainments; but he had only spoken to her twice—once in Bond Street, and once in Kensington Gardens. He never went to Portland Place.

It was a chilly autumn evening, then—and Douglas and Fenwicke were once more enjoying a pipe and a chat in the latter's rooms. They had become great chums by this time, and spent much of their time together.

Fenwicke was lying back in an easy-chair before the fire, talking, for him, very earnestly.

“I am as certain,” he was saying, “as certain that my idea is correct as a man can be certain of anything. I tell you, Coprath, I know the indications—and I'll swear that under that barren-looking land there is almost fabulous wealth. But what's the good?” he added, rising from his

chair and walking restlessly about the room with his hands plunged deeply into his pockets. "I can't get any one else to believe it; and I can't afford to work it myself. If I had only a matter of four hundred or so, I might make a beginning. But as it is—I'm helpless."

"I suppose it would be no use applying to your uncle?" said Douglas, after a pause.

The other shook his head.

"No," he said decidedly. "Besides, I fancy he has dropped a lot himself lately. I don't know in what, but he hinted as much to me."

"Yes, I know," was the brief answer.

"I don't want to borrow the money either"—went on Fenwicke "even if I knew any one who would lend it to me—which I don't. And as for getting any one to go in with a scheme to find mineral anywhere nearer than Australia or Mexico, or Spain—why, you might as well try to organize a scheme for a submarine route to—to Paradise. Everybody seems to think that any mineral to be found in Cornwall has been found long ago. And, indeed, I used to think so myself."

Douglas was smoking thoughtfully.

"I wish to Heaven I had the money," he said with a quick, impatient sigh. "We might go into the thing together."

"I daresay, old fellow," rejoined the other, slapping him affectionately on the shoulder. "But if I didn't know you were as hard up as—as I am myself, I should never have mentioned the matter to you. And as a matter of fact I am most deucedly hard up. Jove! it's marvellous how money melts away! Six months ago I could have taken my oath I'd never be on the rocks again. And now—upon my soul I'm at my wits' end to know how to raise the wind. I'm afraid I shall have to forswear my anti-matrimonial intentions and look out for an heiress—only I don't happen to know any heiresses." And he laughed somewhat ruefully.

Now, why did his words and his tone jar upon his companion? And why did a quick thought of Bee flash through Douglas's mind, coupled with some careless words he had heard her utter only a few months ago? He puffed at his pipe in silence, however; and presently Fenwicke was in full swing once more upon the inexhaustible subject of his Cornish property.

Douglas sat staring into the fire. He was revolving a project in his own mind. Suppose he were to write a successful novel—at last? Suppose he received from £400 to £500 for it? Why not? It was not impossible. Suppose that not only fame but fortune awaited him? His pulses beat quickly, feverishly. All at once a possible plot for his novel rushed across his brain. Whole scenes flashed into vivid life and reality; whole pages of dialogue rose up before him; the cosy firelit room seemed to recede into indefinite space; and Fenwicke's voice sounded far away and indistinct, like a half-heard voice in a dream. For the time the author's soul was in an enchanted world—a world where he was a providence and a creator to all the creatures of his imagination, making them move and think and act according to his will.

He was aroused by the sudden cessation of Fenwicke's voice, and the somewhat noisy opening of the door.

It was a servant, bearing a telegram for Fenwicke. The latter opened it, and a moment later uttered a dismayed exclamation.

"By Jove! I say, Conrath," he said agitatedly—"my poor uncle—he is dying! He wants to see me. There is no time to lose. Will you come with me? Good God!—*dying!* I didn't know he was ill. I didn't know he had come up from Sunningdale. Did you?"

He was halfway downstairs by this time, and Douglas was mechanically following him. In less than three minutes both men had flung themselves into a hansom, and were whirling rapidly towards Lancaster Gate.

Mr. Redman was alive, the man who opened the door informed them with decorous gravity; but the doctors said he could not live more than a few hours at most. It was acute internal inflammation, he added, the result of a sudden chill. Mr. Redman had come home last night, complaining of feeling ill, and had gone to bed immediately.

Fenwicke went upstairs at once. His uncle seemed pleased to see him, and pressed his hand feebly.

"Glad you were in time, my boy," he said with a quivering smile. Then he added brokenly, "I always meant to—to do something for you, Max—when my time came. But—I didn't think it would be so—so soon, and so sudden—and I've lost—a good deal of money lately. When everything's settled there won't be—much

left. And—I have claims on me that—that few know of. You'll have—a hundred a year. Not the principal, Max—not the principal"—this with a grim twinkle in his fast-fading eyes. "It would go—all in a sweep. And see that—young Conrath has—a year's salary. That's all, I think. Shake hands, Max. I've been gruff at times—but you're a nice lad—a nice lad—if you had more ballast. Perhaps—it'll come, though."

He never spoke after that; and half-an-hour later turned his face to the wall, and died.

His nephew went down to the dining-room, where Douglas stood leaning his elbow on the mantelshelf, gazing down into the dying fire. He looked up quickly as Fenwicke entered. Neither spoke for a few minutes. Then Fenwicke said huskily:

"He's gone. He—didn't suffer much. He was a decent, good-hearted old fellow—God rest his soul."

Then there was another silence.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the two friends parted nearly an hour later, Douglas walked slowly along Oxford Street, until he came to Regent Circus. Then by some unconscious impulse, he turned to the left, and walked northward.

He felt shocked and bewildered at the terribly sudden death of his eccentric old friend—and sincerely grieved as well. For he had been a kind, good friend to him in many ways—a friend he was not likely to replace. And he was now cast adrift once more.

Well!—you may say—surely it ought to be easy enough for a man of twenty-seven, with average address and abilities, to find another post of the same kind as the one he had just lost? Yes, I suppose it ought to be easy enough. But like most other possibilities containing the word "ought," the chances in this particular possibility have a way of becoming baffling and illusive when called upon for active service.

To do Douglas justice, however, his thoughts to-night were more of the actual loss of his friend than of its consequences. He could hardly realize that the gruff yet kindly voice was for ever silent, the busy active brain at rest. It was so fearfully sudden, so unlooked for. The old gentleman had gone down into the country for a day or two and had not been expected home until this evening. He had written to Douglas in good spirits and appa-

rently good health only a couple of days ago. Ah, well! he had gone home, indeed!

Perhaps it was not strange that in his musings Douglas should turn his steps towards Portland Place. He often passed by that way, making long *détours* to do so. A carriage stood at the Chandlers' door, the horses champing their bits monotonously. It was a still, clear night, and the hour of eleven shivered up from Westminster. When he was within a dozen paces or so from the carriage, Douglas stood still for a few moments, under the pretext of lighting a cigar. As he struck his second match, a girl, radiant in shimmering satin, half-concealed by the fur-trimmed wrap she wore, came lightly down the steps. A young man came immediately behind her, with a stout old lady upon his arm. The light of the street lamp fell full upon their faces—the girl's, so fresh and fair and gay—the man's, colourless and aristocratic and impassive—the old woman's, fat and unconcerned. In getting into the carriage the girl's foot slipped, and she would have fallen, had not the young man, with a swift movement, put his arm about her. He bent over her, for a second or two, with a few murmured anxious words.

A swift, raging, hitherto unknown passion of jealousy tore through the heart of the unseen watcher—a passion so overwhelming in its intensity, and so full of fierce, intolerable agony, that he turned sick and giddy, and leaned blindly against the railings for support.

He heard the carriage drive past him—he even heard Bee's low laugh float out upon the night in answer to some brief words from Sir Cyril. They did not see him, of course, as he stood there in his bewildered newly-awakened pain. They were not even thinking of him. Why should they?

A few moments later he found himself walking with a quick steady step in the direction of Regent's Park. His face, when the lamp-light now and then fell upon it, was very pale, and his eyes held a wild, half-incredulous misery that was strange to them.

He had "grown acquainted with his heart" indeed, and the knowledge was bitter.

(To be continued.)